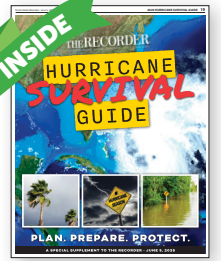


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Thursday, June 5, 2025

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VOLUME 56, NO. 31 \$1.00

Event tackles sales, branding, AI and EI

By Shaun Ryan

It seems that, everywhere we turn, someone is reminding us that AI will change everything.

While that is a reasonable supposition, the entrepreneur plotting the optimal path to success is confronted with a choice: What tasks are best handled by AI, and what tasks are better handled by other means?

Business requires human interaction, and some businesses require a lot of human interaction. And those who excel are arguably the most adept at EI — emotional intelligence.

A balance between AI and EI is perhaps the ideal model in today's business environment.

It's an issue taken up at the most recent Circle of Creation event, held Thursday, May 29, at the link in Nocatee Town Center. The series, now in its second year, was designed for women looking to "level up" their lives and businesses.

About 30 attended the session, though originator Gurpreet Misra hopes to grow that number in future sessions. Misra is co-founder with her husband of the link and the Sapna Foundation, which initiated the Circle of Creation.

Those attending gained valuable

EVENT continues on **Page 4**

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Life Work interns celebrate school year at Vicar's

By Anthony Richards

The St. Johns County School District continues to work closely with the community to help students with disabilities develop the skills they need, and it is no more evident than the partnership it has developed with Vicar's Landing.

Vicar's Landing in Ponte Vedra is one of two locations used as part of the district's Life Work Transition Programs, the other being on the campus of First Coast Technical College in St. Augustine.

The school district's Life Work Transition Program at Vicar's Landing, which serves students with disabilities who have earned a standard high school diploma but need continued support to develop the skills necessary for successful employ-



Photo by Anthony Richards

Students in the St. Johns County School District Life Work Transition Program at Vicar's Landing were celebrated during an end-of-the-year ceremony on May 29.

LIFE WORK continues on **Page 31**

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BRIEFS

Grief support group to meet
A grief support group meets on the third Wednesday of every month at St. Paul’s Catholic Church in Room 107 of the Family Life Center, 578 First Ave. N., Jacksonville Beach. The group is for men and women grieving the death of a family member or friend. The next meeting will be at 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 18. For information, call Kathy at 904-553-8933.

Democratic Club to meet
Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will hold its monthly meeting at 6 p.m. (5:30 p.m. “chat & chew”), Wednesday, June 18, at the Ponte Vedra Beach Library, 101 Library Blvd., Ponte Vedra.
The featured speaker will be attorney Rhona DiCamillo, who will provide updates on pending court actions involving President Trump’s executive orders and policies.
For more information, go to PVDemClub@gmail.com.

Palm Valley Market every Tuesday
The Palm Valley Market is held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Tuesday inside the Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Road. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, local honey, tea, seasonal treats, soap, jewelry, plants and more.

Farmers market open every Friday
The Ponte Vedra Friday Farmers Market takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Friday at The Peace of Heart Community Farm, offering fresh produce, local farm goods and a welcoming space to connect with neighbors and small businesses.
This farmers market features fresh, organically grown produce; Florida grass-fed beef and pork; real local honey; pasture-raised chicken and eggs; wholegrain breads;

BRIEFS continues on Page 3

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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Briefs

Continued from 2

gluten-free sourdough bread; natural botanical skincare; creations by local artisans and more in a family-friendly atmosphere

The Peace of Heart Community Farm is located at 14A S. Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach.

Portion of UNF Drive closed, traffic will be redirected

A portion of UNF Drive in Jacksonville between lots 7 and lots 9 and 10 is

closed to traffic in both directions until Sunday, June 22. The closure is due to construction related to the University of North Florida’s new honors residence hall. All parking lots, including lots 7, 9 and 10, will remain open. The two shuttle stops in front of lot 7 (Engineering South and Engineering North) will be closed, but students can pick up shuttles near Osprey Café or the Student Union. Directional signage will be posted. View the road closure map at <https://links.unf.edu/campus-map-road-closure>.

Fine opens first of five local offices

The Office of Congressman Randy Fine

has announced the opening of the first of five new 6th Congressional District offices. This first new office is open now in the government complex in Palatka.

The new district offices will provide a range of services, including:

- Assistance with federal agencies: Resolving issues or obtaining information from federal entities.
- Social Security and Medicare support: Addressing stalled claims and answering questions about benefits.
- Service academy nominations: Nominating exceptional young men and women for prestigious military academies.

- Federal grants guidance: Helping local businesses access available funding opportunities.
 - Legislative engagement: Sharing constituent opinions on upcoming legislation and providing information on federal policies and regulations.
 - Washington, D.C., tours: Arranging visits to the Capitol, White House, and other landmarks.
- Office locations will follow shortly in Marion, Lake, Volusia and Flagler counties.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

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Photos by Susan Griffin
Speaker Tery Spataro demystified AI agents.

Event

Continued from 1

insights into both AI and EI. While that is a theme throughout this year’s series, sales and branding were the session’s specific focuses.

Misra started things off, speaking about the essence of branding through the lens of entrepreneurship.

“Branding begins long before logos and color palettes,” she said. “It starts in the quiet, often unseen journey of an entrepreneur, where a vision is born, refined and protected. A clear point of view becomes your greatest differentiator in a crowded marketplace.”

She said true branding is about ensuring that one’s purpose is reflected in actions, decisions and interactions, consistently and authentically.

Toward this end, proficiency with EI — with its five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills — is critical to the hu-



Lori Pugh spoke on keeping the human element when using AI.

man interaction portion of the business. AI can handle a great many tasks that used to require more people, but it cannot replace EI.

Other speakers included Tery Spataro, who demystified the AI agent; Lori Pugh, who delivered insights on personalizing sales with AI while remaining true to



Gurpreet Misra speaks about branding.



Speaker Parul Patel addressed the pros and cons of the Amazon Go initiative.

brand; and Parul Patel, who reviewed Amazon Go as a case study.

When Thursday’s session was finished, Misra heard from one of the attendees who praised the presentation as very timely and helpful. In fact, Misra has received much positive feedback since the series began.

The event was loaded with useful information, such as the importance of maintaining brand consistency amid a popular shift away from Google searches and toward ChatGPT, and how Google has made creation of AI agents more accessible with its Google Gems initiative.

Through Circle of Creation, Misra empowers businesswomen to understand AI but also to address it on their own terms.

“You are the command center,” she reminds her audience.

The next session in the series will be held June 25. The focus will be “Leadership & Emotional Intelligence + AI.”



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VILLAGES OF HOPE 5K SET FOR JUNE 21

By Anthony Richards

Hope can be found in a variety of ways and on June 21 the Fifth Annual Run for Hope 5K will take place in San Marco to provide just that.

The Villages of Hope is a local nonprofit that helps women in Northeast Florida by providing a sanctuary, a place of refuge, healing and restoration for women seeking a life free from trafficking, sexual exploitation and addiction.

Their vision addresses the urgent need

for long-term housing for women in Jacksonville, offering a supportive community that fosters recovery and independence.

Through the efforts and support of multiple organizations, Villages of Hope and the Keiling Group held an official groundbreaking ceremony for 14 tiny homes on the westside of Jacksonville on July 27, 2023.

The homes will provide shelter for women who have suffered from addiction and sexual exploitation, with each resident participating in a two-year program

tailored to their unique needs, featuring trauma-informed services such as therapy, counseling, education and long-term life planning. The houses will be built by local builders and volunteers.

The 5K is an opportunity for their message to continue to be spread to the local community while also gaining further support to help grow its mission through fundraising.

The run will take place on the Southbank Riverwalk in San Marco starting at King Avenue Station located at 1201 Kings Ave.

with the 5K beginning at 8 a.m. and a one-mile fun run scheduled to start at 9 a.m.

All participants will receive a medal and T-shirt with their registration for the event.

Runners can pick up their packets the day of the race by arriving at 7 a.m. or by stopping by a pair of 1st Place Sports locations at 3931 Baymeadows Road or 2018 San Marco Blvd. on June 20 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Winners will be crowned in the men's and women's divisions as well as awards for various age groups.

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Tammy Coomer, founder of Sea Breeze Cleaning Services, built her business out of a desire to give back and create opportunity after settling in St. Augustine with her family. With 15 years of dedication behind her, she’s proud of the strong community relationships she’s formed and excited to continue growing her impact locally and beyond.

Tammy Coomer

As told to Holly Tishfield

Tell me about yourself and your background.

I am originally from Brazil, Indiana, and I moved here about 17-18 years ago. My husband's work as a commercial construction superintendent brought us to many different states. He was involved in large-scale projects, including the Epic movie theater here in St. Augustine and the surrounding areas. Our travels were extensive during our marriage, but we fell in love with this town. Despite building a new home in Indiana, St. Augustine just felt like home, so we decided to settle here.

Tell me about your family life.

My husband’s career led us through various cities and states, as the company was licensed in 22 states for commercial construction. Throughout our family travels, I homeschooled our son to ensure he had consistent education and social interactions, taking advantage of recess to play with other children. When we moved here, he chose to attend public school, and I supported that transition. Since our son enrolled in school here, I decided it was the right time to focus on my own path.

Tell me about how you began your business, Sea Breeze Cleaning Services.

I started it in 2010. My motivation for starting the business was to give back to the community and provide employment opportunities for others, enabling them to support their families. My journey to becoming a professional cleaner started with an innocent camp competition in my youth — the person who kept their dorm the cleanest won. So, while my roommates were out playing softball, I rolled up my sleeves and cleaned the room from top to bottom — and enjoyed every minute of it. It took four days to get it perfect, but I won! It definitely planted the seeds for my future ventures.

What was the vision when you first began?

When I first started my business, I initially serviced residential clients but soon shifted to predominantly commercial properties.

Was this your first time owning/operating a business?

Yes, I am a first-time business owner. As a first-time business owner, the experience has been incredibly rewarding. I’ve learned so much about



Contributed photo

Tammy Coomer, founder of Sea Breeze Cleaning Services

managing a business, dealing with diverse personalities and maintaining strong client relationships.

As you look back on 15 years, what are you most proud of?

Reflecting on the past 15 years, I realize that one of the biggest rewards has been developing meaningful relationships within the community. The support has been vital to my success, and I am grateful for the encouragement I’ve received every step of the way.

Have you felt the support of the community throughout your time in business?

Absolutely. We’ve built strong relationships within the community, and word-of-mouth referrals drive a significant portion of our business. It’s really validating to have your customers show that kind of support, that they trust you enough to recommend you to their friends, family and business associates.

What’s been the most challenging part of running your business, and

how have you overcome it?

Ensuring each client receives a high standard of cleaning can be difficult due to varying expectations, different cleaning staff and fluctuating schedules. A lot of training, quality control and communication with staff and clients have helped provide the quality of services.

What are you most looking forward to with the future of the business?

I am looking forward to growing within the community and expanding to other communities.

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Beaches nonprofits receive grants from local fund

The Beaches Community Fund, a collective giving initiative of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, recently made \$319,000 in grants donations to 19 nonprofits that address critical needs facing the local beaches area.

With the latest grants, the collective giving circle has now invested more than \$2.5 million in grants to nonprofits since the fund began making annual grants in 2015.

It is now comprised of more than 35 families, who pool resources to support nonprofits from Mayport to Guana.

“Our Grants Committee made 26 site visits to nonprofits in our area. The committee was not only impressed by the quality and commitment of each of the nonprofits selected this year but also humbled by the reality of their ongoing need for support,” said Caroline Fitzgerald, a member of the fund who presented the 2025-26 grants on behalf of the Grants Committee. “We wish to congratulate this year’s grantees and thank them for their service to the community.”

The Beaches Community Fund continues its focus on financial, food and housing assistance, supports for students and youth, as well as care for older adults.

Members of the fund supported capacity building of local nonprofits through a partnership with the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida, and as in years past, the Beaches Community Fund received many strong applications for support and was pleased to make substantial investments to improve the quality of life for all Beaches-area residents.

The following grants were awarded:

Beaches Council on Aging – \$20,000 – Expand Dial-a-Ride senior transportation by offsetting increased insurance and staffing costs.

Beaches Habitat for Humanity – \$20,000 – Support home repairs for seniors and veterans to remain safely



Contributed photo

Caroline Fitzgerald calls for a vote to approve the grants during a recent members meeting.

housed.

BEAM – \$40,000 – Sustain emergency assistance programs including food, financial aid and care coordination.

Boys & Girls Club of NE FL – \$5,000 – Enhance Project Learn with updated tech and staff support for after-school academics.

City Year Jacksonville – \$20,000 – Support Whole School Whole Child program at Mayport Elementary to boost student outcomes.

Communities in Schools – \$20,000 – Fund case manager at Mayport Coastal Sciences Middle to support student success.

Feeding Northeast Florida – \$30,000 – Fund food distribution programs serving Beaches communities.

First Coast Blessings in a Backpack – \$25,000 – Provide weekend meals to students at four Beaches-area schools.

Girl Scouts of Gateway Council – \$2,500 – Expand Girl Scout troops at Anchor Academy and McKenzie’s Boys & Girls Club.

I.M. Sulzbacher Center for The Homeless – \$25,000 – Support staffing for mobile outreach bus serving the unhoused at the Beaches.

Mission House – \$30,000 – Sustain Intake Coordinator role to expand client support and meal services.

Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida – \$18,500 – Develop Indicators Dashboard and offer workshops to strengthen nonprofits.

PossAbilities Plus – \$5,000 – Support first-year costs of free transport for students with disabilities to internships.

READ USA – \$10,000 – Promote literacy through book fairs and workshops for families and educators.

Safety Shelter of St. Johns (Betty Griffin Center) – \$4,000 – Continue violence prevention programming at Ponte Vedra Beach High.

St. John’s Emergency Assistance Ministry – \$10,000 – Provide food and financial assistance to Atlantic Beach and Mayport residents.

St. Vincent dePaul Beaches – \$10,000 – Offer crisis assistance including housing, food and basic needs support.

The Young Men’s Christian Association – \$15,000 – Enrich middle school program with STEAM, mental health and leadership workshops.

WJCT – \$9,000 – Expand PBS Kids learning workshops for young children in the Beaches community.

The Beaches Community Fund was established in 2015 by charitable Beaches-area families to address concerns about the issues affecting their neighbors between Mayport and Guana.

To learn more about the initiative residents can go to www.jaxcf.org/beaches or contact Wanda Willis, vice president of civic leadership by emailing wwillis@jaxcf.org or calling 904-356-4483.

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Know the ground rules before digging

Spring is here, and the warmer season means Floridians are getting their shovels ready for a multitude of outdoor improvement projects, ranging from planting new landscaping to installing a fence or deck to working on their home's overall curb appeal.

However, homeowners should take caution with these activities as dangers lie below.

While it's the most active season for outdoor to-do work, it's also a time when telecommunications, water and gas lines are increasingly hit. Last year, there were more than 26,000 reported damages to buried lines in Florida.

Sunshine 811 encourages homeowners and professional contractors to take the right steps to dig safely, especially as landscaping and fencing combined cause the most damage to underground utility lines (some of which are just inches to a foot or two below the surface). Damage from hand tools and digging equipment can result in costly repairs, service interruptions and potential injuries.

Sunshine 811 offers advice to avoid these five all too-common mistakes:

Not contacting 811 before you dig. This is the number one cause of damage to underground utilities and is



completely preventable. By contacting 811, you ensure your safety and avoid potential inconveniences and accidents by having buried lines marked by your utility companies. Contacting 811 before you dig is also the law.

Not waiting the required time to dig so underground utility lines can be marked. While no one likes waiting to get started on a project, the law requires you to wait two full business days (after requesting a locate ticket with 811) to have underground lines marked and to begin digging.

Not understanding the difference between public and private lines. While utilities mark public lines such as gas, electric, telecom and water mains, it's your responsibility to have private lines marked, including the water line

from your meter to property, irrigation, landscape lighting, pool pumps and gas lines to grills.

Not realizing the rules around easements. Easements or right-of-ways on your property mean others, like a utility company, have access to part of your land to, for example, dig around a pipe or cable. If there are easements on your property, they may restrict your ability to excavate in certain areas. Check with your utility company. Utility boxes and pedestals on your property are fed by underground utility lines. Do not dig or plant around these structures.

Not considering the damage hand tools and equipment can cause. Heavy foot pressure on a shovel can inadvertently hit a shallow buried line, while a backhoe or stump grinder can

easily dig up close-to-the surface and deeper underground lines leaving you with steep repair costs. That's why it's important to contact 811 and have all lines marked.

"This time of year, people love to beautify their property," said Wendy Schaefer, education and awareness manager for Sunshine 811. "We want them to start by being informed, taking the right steps and digging safely. What may seem like an easy or small project can turn into a serious and dangerous situation if you don't follow the process, starting with contacting 811. You can't put a price on safety and protecting human life."

811 can be accessed by entering those numbers directly on your phone or by visiting digsafeflorida.com and clicking on "Create a Ticket."

Sunshine 811 is also Florida's go-to resource for education on safe digging. The organization's online Learning Center offers in-depth information, resources and videos on a variety of topics, including the six essential steps for safe digging, safe planting tips, damage prevention and more.

For more information about being safe and smart while digging, go to digsafeflorida.com.

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Kendall to report on legislative session



The Palm Valley Community Association will host a special meeting with state Rep. Kim Kendall on Monday, June 9.

Kendall was elected last November and served in her first legislative session, which began on March 4.

She will share her observations from her first

legislative session, reflections on the 2026 state budget, her bill HB 85 on Hazardous Walking Conditions to ensure safe passage for students walking to school, summer beach access in the greater Ponte Vedra Beach area, the state's perspective on future beach restoration projects, improvements at the I-95 and S.R. 16 intersection, next steps following the "Stop the Swap" victory and other topics of interest to residents.

There will be time for questions. The Palm Valley Community Association invites all residents to attend this special event to learn about Kendall's priorities for the next session and to share their thoughts and concerns. The meeting will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Blvd.

Volunteers remove 850 pounds of trash from local beaches

On May 10, St. Johns County hosted the 22nd annual Turtletown USA Beach Cleanup. Over the past two decades, this cleanup has helped remove litter and debris from St. Johns County beaches in preparation for sea turtle nesting season, which begins every year on May 1.

"We had a great turnout this year with over 250 volunteers across eight different locations," said Matthew Denny, digital media manager for St. Johns County and this year's event organizer. "Twenty different county departments and local organizations joined forces and together, we were able to remove over 850 pounds of trash from our beaches."

This annual cleanup is part of the St. Johns County Get Hooked Anti-Litter Initiative, which won multiple awards at a national conference last year and encourages residents to "get hooked" on keeping the county litter free.

Since the campaign's inception in January 2024, the county has hosted six events with 1,308 volunteers dedicating 3,263 hours of service to clean up 5,690 lbs. of trash from our community.

"We are not only getting hooked, we're get-

ting results," said Denny.

"Removing any litter or trash that could be on the beach is very important for these mothers coming up," said Michelle Schenck, park services specialist with Anastasia State Park. "It's important we continue to do this throughout the season so when the hatchlings come (...) we want to make sure it's as clean and safe as possible."

"If you're at the beach and you have any holes, make sure you fill that back up," said Rich Gallik, president of the Friends of Anastasia State Park. "That's important so the hatchlings don't fall into that hole and can't get out."

Keeping St. Johns County beaches free of debris and obstacles is especially important because the county is home to rare Kemp's Ridley sea turtles that nested in record numbers here last year.

"I am so thankful for all of our dedicated partners and volunteers that make this possible," Denny said. "The commitment to conservation, keeping our beaches clean and taking pride in where we live is what makes St. Johns County so special."

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Charles Bemis to be ordained a priest, serve locally



Deacon Charles Bemis

Deacon Charles Bemis will be ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of St. Augustine at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 7, at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine, 38 Cathedral Place. The ordination Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Erik Pohlmeier, and all are welcome to attend. The liturgy will also be livestreamed on the diocesan YouTube channel (YouTube.

com/dosacatholics).

Looking back, Bemis said he first felt called to the priesthood when he was about 6 years old while preparing for his first Communion at St. Luke Parish in Middleburg. He attended Sunday Mass with his family and weekday Mass with classmates at Annunciation Catholic School in Middleburg. He also accompanied his grandmother to weekly Eucharistic adoration. “I saw the joy priests had on the altar,” Bemis said. “At that age, I didn’t understand the theology or anything, but I knew I wanted that kind of joy.” As he got older, other interests took over. While still active as an altar server, lector and in youth ministry, his focus had shifted to sports, girls and a dream of becoming a sports journalist.



Photo by Tom Tracy

From left, Father Clay Ludwig, vocations director for the Diocese of St. Augustine; Bishop Gerald Barbarito of Palm Beach; newly ordained Deacon Charles Bemis; and Bishop Erik Pohlmeier of St. Augustine are pictured following the diaconate ordination on April 13, 2024, in Boynton Beach.

In 2015, between his junior and senior years at Oakleaf High School, a visiting seminarian at St. Luke’s parish made an unexpected impression. “I liked him — he seemed like a regular guy,” Bemis said. “I thought, if he’s discerning, maybe I could be too. At the Steubenville retreat, I felt God tugging. I opened the door a little bit and answered the altar call to receive a blessing.” Encouraged by his pastor, Bemis attended a discernment retreat at Marywood Retreat Center in St. Johns. “I thought I was going to get my answer that weekend,” he said. “It was a nice retreat, but I didn’t get

the spiritual high I’d had at Steubenville. So, I thought maybe this wasn’t for me.” Later that year, while visiting Tallahassee, his birthplace and where his mother had attended college, the family went to Mass at their former parish. As they were leaving, the priest greeted them — and then turned to Bemis. “He asked my name, looked at me, and said, ‘Are you discerning a call to the priesthood?’” Bemis said. “I was stunned. I didn’t know what to say — I just made a beeline for the car.” Still planning for a future in journalism, Bemis couldn’t shake the feeling that “something felt off.” The door to his vocation, he said, was starting to open again. During Lent in 2016, he returned to adoration. “During Holy Week, I was in the chapel and prayed, ‘If this is your will, let it be done.’ I felt the burden lift,” he said. “On Easter morning, I watched Father Remek Blaszkowski and his brother, Father Andy, celebrate Mass. I saw their joy again, but now I understood. I decided to apply to seminary.” The priests even drove him to St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami for his entrance. “Father Remek told me, ‘You’re not getting married today, you’re just opening the door. If God wants you to be a priest, he’ll let you know,’” Bemis said. Bemis has since completed his theological studies and priestly formation, including time at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach. His journey culminates on June 7 with ordination to the priesthood. He will begin his first priestly assignment as parochial vicar at Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Ponte Vedra Beach on July 1.

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Taylor Swift-themed Daddy Daughter Dance is Saturday

Get ready to shake it off and step into a night full of sparkle, songs and unforgettable memories! The link's Daddy Daughter Dance is back — and this time, they're channeling the magic of Taylor Swift.

"You Belong With Me — A Taylor Swift Theme Daddy Daughter Dance" will be held 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday, June 7, at the link, 425 Town Plaza Ave., Ponte Vedra.

Cost for one adult and one child (including fee and tax) is \$75.84. Add a second daughter

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Dance the night away to DJ Kacey spinning all the hits — from "Love Story" to "Cruel Summer." Enjoy sweets and treats, pose at the glammed-up selfie station and embrace the fun by dressing in your favorite Taylor Swift era-inspired outfit.

Sing, trade friendship bracelets and make memories.

Get tickets at Eventbrite.com.

Habitat St. Johns accepting applications

Habitat St. Johns is accepting homeownership applications for new homes in Phase 3 of Volusia Woods.

Volusia Woods is located off Volusia Street near the Four Mile Road traffic circle. The next 18 homes will be built on McDonald Avenue. Habitat St. Johns will be constructing single-family, three-bedroom/two-bathroom and two-bedroom/one-bathroom homes on this property.

The 2/1 homes are about 900 square feet and currently appraise for approximately \$245,000; the 3/2 homes are about 1,100 square feet and are appraising for approximately \$275,000. All homes come with brand-new appliances: refrigerator, range, microwave, dishwasher, washer/dryer and energy-efficient water heaters.

The homes all have metal roofs, granite countertops and a one-year home warranty.

Contact Tom Torretta at ttorretta@habitatstjohns.org if you would like to arrange a tour to see home interiors.

To qualify, you must meet the following basic requirements:

- Household must fall within 30-120% of the area median income level. (See income guidelines at habitatstjohns.org/homeownership.)
- Applicant/co-applicant must be willing to partner with Habitat for Humanity of St. Johns County to volunteer sweat equity hours.
- Applicant/co-applicant must have a credit score of 640 or higher.
- Applicant/co-applicant must display a need for housing.

• All household members must be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.

Go to habitatstjohns.org/homeownership to see the full list of qualifications and learn more about the homeownership program. Applications are processed on a first-submitted, first-qualified basis.

Applications can be submitted online or in person, and required documents can be mailed or dropped off in person to: Candice Marhanka, Habitat of St. Augustine/St. Johns County, 7 Hopkins St., St. Augustine, FL 32084

If you have any questions about qualifications or the application process, contact the homeowner services manager at cmarhanka@habitatstjohns.org or 904-826-3252 ext 2005.

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Boost your yard’s beauty with a little help from the bees

By Holly Tishfield

Wondering why the flowers in your yard are looking a little worse for wear? Why those cucumbers are skinny, deformed and generally poor growing? It

could have a little something to do with your friendly neighborhood pollinators or lack thereof. A luscious yard needs pollinators to grow, whether you’re planting garde-

nias, hydrangeas or tomato plants. Pollinators like honeybees and butterflies are essential to the success of just about everything that flowers.

“Bees pollinate a huge area and will travel within about a five-mile radius,” said Martha Yamnitzs, a member of the St. Johns County Beekeepers Association and owner of Bee Augustine Honey Co. “So, if you provide something for them in your yard, they will find it and they will come to pollinate it.”

The St. Johns County Beekeepers Association is a local organization of volunteers dedicated to providing educa-

tion and teaching best management practices for local backyard beekeepers. Their mission for the past 14 years has been to educate and inform local residents of St. Johns County of the many benefits of honeybees and their importance to the diverse ecosystem.

The association meets in person once per month to host guest speakers who specialize in beekeeping education.

Yamnitzs got involved with the St. Johns County Beekeepers Association about eight years ago when she noticed what she thought was a hive of bees in



Contributed photos1

Honeybees will travel within a five-mile radius of their hives.

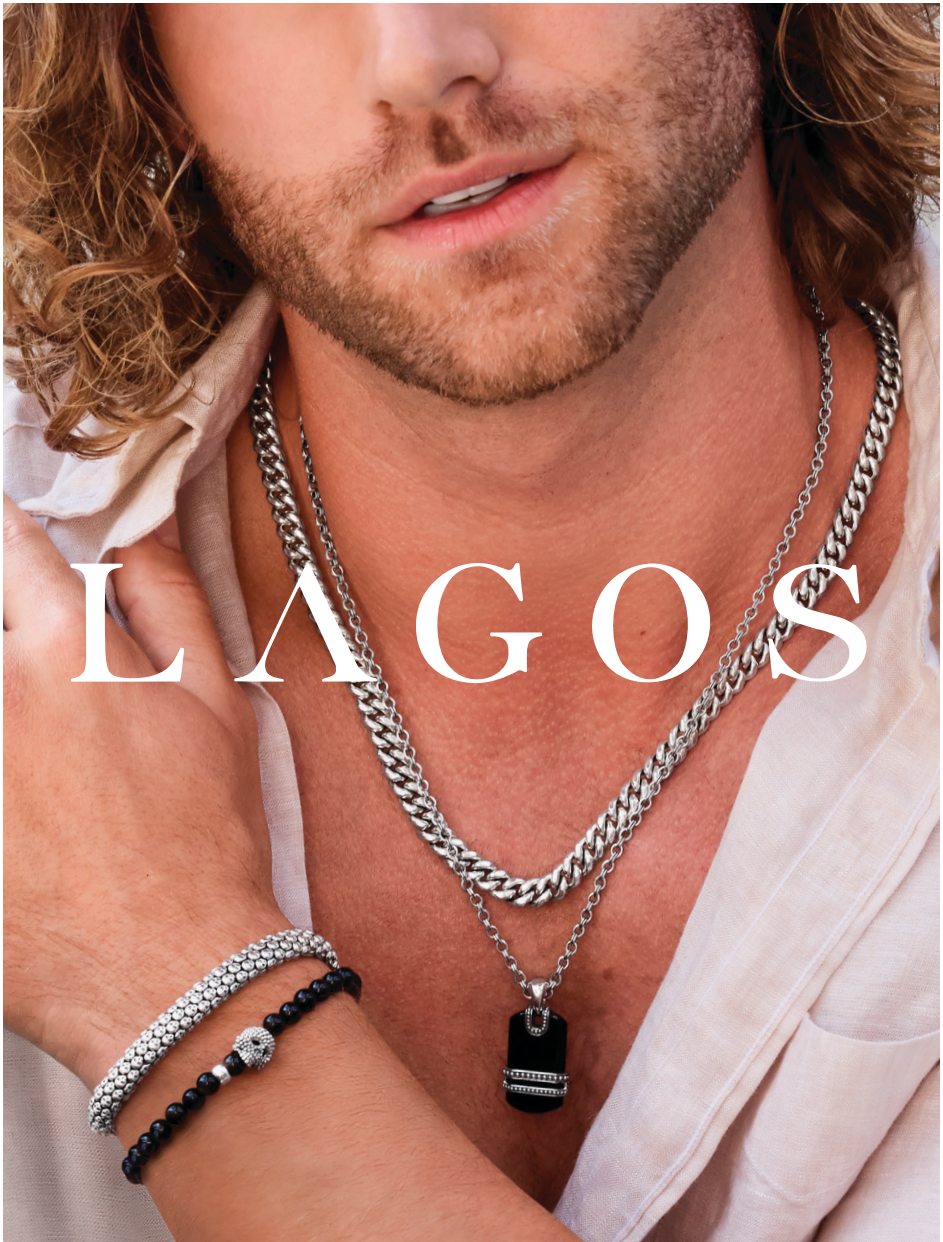
BEES continues on Page 14



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Contributed photos

Pollinators allow flowering plants to grow bigger and brighter.

Bees

Continued from 13

her yard, but wanted to help them thrive, not exterminate them.

Over time with the association’s help, she began beekeeping professionally and started her business, Bee Augustine Honey Co., in the hopes of educating other members of the public about beekeeping, plus selling the fresh products that come from her hives.

If beekeeping sounds a little outside

your realm of expertise but you still want to keep the pollinators in your yard happy, Yamnitzs recommends planting native flowers like Mexican heather, African blue basil, and even Spanish needle. Plants that are both beautiful aesthetically and important in keeping honeybees happy.

“Looking in your yard, if you don’t mow it and see what grows naturally, that’ll be a good flower to plant because the bees love native flowers,” Yamnitzs said.

When it comes to specialized landscaping, Yamnitzs recommends visiting your



The St. Johns Beekeeping Association educates the public on the importance of honeybees in the garden.

local nursery to speak with a professional about specific plants and flowers that can attract pollinators like honeybees and butterflies to your yard.

“What I learned after having bees is that the important part is not to have one Mexican heather here and one African blue basil there, but instead to have a bulk area of the same plant,” she said.

You could try planting a border of the same plant around a bed of varying plants or simply plant half a dozen gardenia bushes next to one another. She explained that honeybees don’t cross-pollinate, so

having multiple of the same plant means the bees are more likely to stick around.

While wind and rain might pollinate plants, nothing speeds up the process and leads to a bigger, brighter bounty than those assisted by pollinators.

If you spot a hive in your yard this summer, the St. Johns County Beekeepers Association can help safely relocate the bees.

For a comprehensive list of Florida’s bee-friendly flowers/plants, go to <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/bee-plants>.



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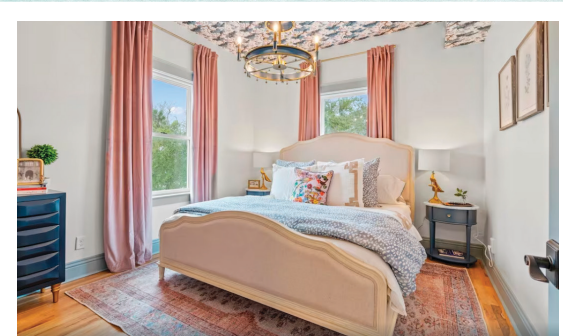
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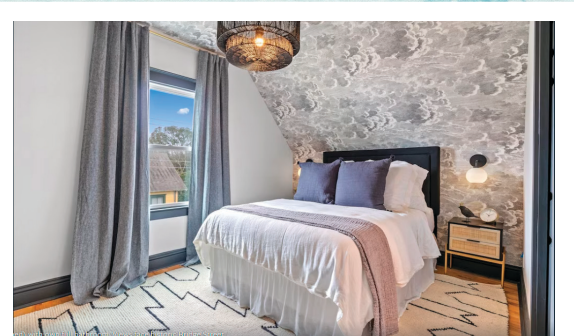
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The Recorder’s garden columnist, Kathy Esfahani of Kathy’s Creative Gardens & Nursery, shares her tips for growing gorgeous gardens in Northeast Florida.

Photos provided by Kathy’s Creative Gardens & Nursery

KATHY’S GARDENING GUIDE

Low Maintenance Landscaping

“Those who find beauty in all of nature will find themselves at one with the secrets of life itself.”
— L. Wolfe Gilbert

By Kathy Esfahani



Kathy Esfahani

Keeping your yard beautiful does not have to require hours of work! Low maintenance landscaping is attainable and enjoyable with just a bit of planning.

Although every flower and/or plant needs some level of maintenance, it is possible to find colorful plants, evergreens, and shrubs that only need attention from time to time.

Keep these tips in mind when planning a low maintenance landscape:

- Plants that tolerate heat are more viable in our area. Look for Florida



Kathy’s Creative Gardens & Nursery

friendly plants when selecting options for your yard. Consider the sturdiness of a plant for resisting high heat/humidity, wind, and changing weather.

- Although there are flowers that require less attention than others, look

for plants with colorful and interesting foliage. Flowers generally require more time, deadheading, and replacement. Foliage offers not only color, but also textures, shapes, and patterns. Look for plants with variegated leaves featuring stripes or color splashes.

- Consider the form of a plant that you choose — do you prefer a tight, clean look or a more loose, natural appearance? Look for plants that fit the form you prefer to avoid extra trimming.

- Choose larger plants with a broad reach side-to-side or cascading branches. These choices might include palms, shrubs, or groundcovers. By selecting bigger options, you will gain a lush, full look with fewer total plants and, therefore, have less to maintain.

- Slow growing evergreen plants and trees are nice alternatives for a low maintenance landscape since they do not drop their leaves. Be cautious of adding evergreens that grow more quickly, however, as they do require more pruning.



Dune Sunflower

As you design your low maintenance landscape, consider the following plants to add color, fullness, and interest to your yard: African Iris, Agapanthus, Arboricola, Aztec Grass, Black-Eyed Susan, Blue Daze, Cast Iron Plant, Croton, Dune Sunflower, Foxtail Fern, Gaillardia, Lantana, Liriope, Muhly Grass, Penta, Rosemary, Vinca, and any Ginger or succulent.

Happy planting!

Flower of the Week: Dune Sunflower

Please email Kathy at kathys.creativegardens@gmail.com for any questions or gardening tips you would like to see in the future. For more information and ideas, visit our nursery in Ponte Vedra Beach! Kathy’s Creative Gardens & Nursery, 196 N. Roscoe Blvd. 904-655-7373

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St. Johns County announces support for Veterans Village

St. Johns County recently announced financial support for Veterans Village of St. Johns. At its Jan. 21 meeting, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution to allocate \$125,000 in funding for fiscal year 2025 to Home Again St. Johns, Inc. for operational costs for Veterans Village, as well as recommending annual reoccurring funding subject to yearly appropriation and budget approval.

“Everything we like about living here in America and the right to voice our opinion about the things we don’t like — all those things are only possible because of our veterans putting themselves in harm’s way,” said County Commissioner Christian Whitehurst.

Home Again St. Johns and the Veterans Council of St. Johns County joined forces to buy St. Augustine’s Old Town Inn and repurpose it into Veterans Village, supportive housing for military veterans.

“It’s been a great opportunity to give them the safety and security that they now have here at the Veterans Village,” said Bill Dudley, chairman of Veterans Council.

Operated and managed by Home Again St. Johns, Veterans Village is a sanctuary for military veterans to regain their footing and find a safe haven.

“This is a win-win not only for the community, but especially for our veteran community,” said County Commissioner Clay Murphy.

In March 2024, Home Again St. Johns, Inc. purchased a motel on Anastasia Island called the St. Augustine’s Old Town Inn to serve as the Veterans Village.

“It’s really unique and wonderful to see something that’s broken like the hotels or the apartment complexes that no one is using and it’s not anyone’s home and



The Veterans Village sign and building

then we go and refurbish them and becomes someone’s home,” said County Commissioner Krista Joseph.

The 20-unit, one apartment facility provides supportive housing exclusively for military veterans, offering both transitional and permanent affordable options for residents and offers wraparound supportive services such as access to health care, mental health support, addiction recovery programs and employment assistance.

“When you look at what a veteran has done for us, to be honest, it seems like such a small way for us to show our appreciation,” said County Commissioner Ann Taylor.

Veterans Village serves as a sanctuary where veterans can rebuild their lives, fostering dignity, independence, personal growth, housing stabilization and community.



The Veterans Village sign with flags.

The \$125,000 in grant funding from the county is for veteran-related needs and operational needs at Veterans Village, including case management, resource and referral, employment-related activities, drug and alcohol support, transportation to appointments, deposits, rental assistance, food, durable medical equipment (not covered by insurance, VA, etc.), appliances to assist the veteran such as grab bars, shower chairs, etc. (not covered by any insurance, VA, etc.) and other needs a veteran may need to start work or continue employment and remain housed.

“It was so important that we helped stand this up; they were so close to making Veterans Village a reality, and it was our privilege and honor to be able to make that come to fruition,” said County Commissioner Sarah Arnold.

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Theme park design contest launched

From the thrill rides and performances to the shops and restaurants, every element of a theme park experience is crafted with intention. Now, a new competition hopes to find the designers of the future — and winners will earn a college scholarship and a trip to Universal Orlando Resort.

The Theme Park Design Competition presented by Ringling College of Art and Design will be open to all U.S. high school juniors and seniors from Sept. 1 to Nov. 30.

The competition requires all entrants to conceptualize a mobile merchandise cart that could be used in outdoor theme parks. Each student entry will be evaluated by a panel of judges, including professors from Ringling College of Art and Design, Universal Creative and other experienced professionals in the entertainment design industry.

The top prize winners will win a \$20,000 tuition scholarship to Ringling College of Art and Design and an exclusive VIP “behind the scenes” experience at Universal Studios Florida with complimentary travel and accommodations. Selected second and third place competition finalists can also earn a scholarship to the

2025 Ringling College of Art and Design PreCollege Summer Program. Entries will be judged in December with winners announced in January.

“Entertainment Design impacts everything from theme parks, museums and concerts to hotels, retail stores and sporting events,” said Jamie DeRuyter, entertainment design department head at Ringling College of Art and Design. “Through this competition, we hope to inspire today’s high school students to see themselves as tomorrow’s immersive experience designers and raise their awareness of this exciting, versatile and fast-growing career field.”

“We are proud to collaborate with Ringling College of Art and Design in creating this first-of-its-kind entertainment design competition,” said Eliza Lee of Universal Creative. “This competition is intended to get high school juniors and seniors thinking practically about how to solve creative problems, design memorable experiences and bring their unique ideas to life.”

For more information about the Theme Park Design Competition presented by Ringling College of Art and Design, go to www.ringling.edu/themeparkdesigncompetition.

Students produce Clerk’s property fraud PSA



Contributed photo

Students from George Washington University created the PSA.

The St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller’s Office is debuting a new public service announcement (PSA) aimed at educating residents about the growing threat of property fraud. The PSA, created by students from George Washington University, has been submitted to local television stations and will run across social media platforms.

“The opportunity to support these students while also spreading awareness about a critical issue was a win-win,” said Clerk Brandon J. Patty. “The final PSA is even more beneficial to help inform St. Johns County homeowners.”

Patty, an alum of George Washington University, initiated the project to inspire and support upper class students as they prepare to enter the workforce. As part of their final communications project, the students teamed up

with the Clerk’s Office to craft a compelling campaign with a powerful message: Property fraud is real, and it’s on the rise.

According to the FBI, property fraud — when someone illegally records a fraudulent deed, mortgage or lien against a property — is one of the fastest-growing white-collar crimes in the country. During National Homeownership Month, the Clerk’s Office is committed to combating this threat through education and tools like our free Recording Activity Notification Service, which alerts homeowners when a document is filed into the Official Records under their name.

Since launching in 2018, nearly 30,000 residents have signed up for the free alert system, including 2,365 new users this year alone.

To watch the PSA or learn more about how to sign up for the free property fraud alert service, go to stjohnsclerk.com/PSA.

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www.habitatstjohns.org

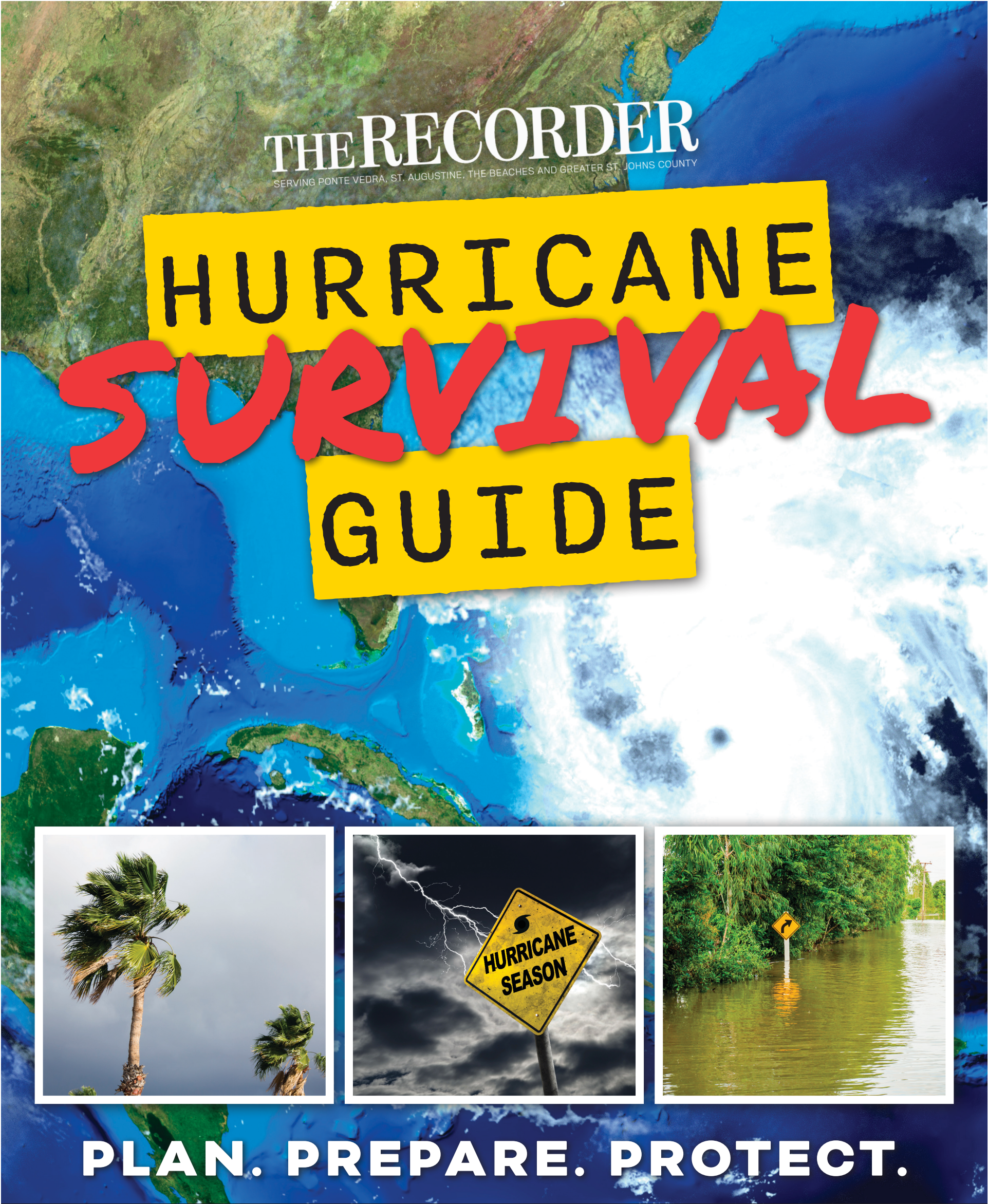
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HURRICANE

SURVIVAL

GUIDE



PLAN. PREPARE. PROTECT.

HURRICANE SURVIVAL GUIDE

HURRICANE CHECKLISTS

Have a plan before disaster strikes

A disaster can strike quickly and without warning. You can be forced to evacuate your neighborhood or be confined to your home. The best solution is to have a plan in place before disaster strikes.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- What is your home’s vulnerability to storm surge, flooding and wind?
- What is your evacuation zone and evacuation route? Find your zone at sjcfl.us/evacuation-information.
- If asked to evacuate, where will you go? Find shelter information at sjcfl.us/evacuation-information/hurricane-evacuation-shelters.
- Do you have a family member with special medical needs? Find special needs shelters at sjcfl.us/evacuation-information/hurricane-evacuation-shelters.
- Do you have pets? Does your plan include them? See the pet checklist at sjcfl.us/hurricane-preparedness/#pets.

AT HOME

- 3-day supply of water
- 3-day supply of nonperishable foods
- medications, specialized supplies
- diabetic’s insulin, small cooler for insulin
- toiletries
- flashlight and batteries
- pillows and blankets
- sleeping bag or egg-crate mattress
- cot or lawn chair

- important papers and identification
- extra clothing
- books, magazines, cards, etc.
- caregiver if you have special needs

Also, at home or before you go to a shelter:

- fill tub at home with water for sanitation
- porta-pot at home for well-water users
- fire extinguisher

ON THE ROAD Prepare ahead for the trip. Here are some things to bring.

- cash and credit cards
- important documents
- road maps
- jumper cables
- tire repair kit
- flashlight and batteries
- battery-operated radio
- fire extinguisher
- blankets and sleeping bags
- pillows
- toiletries
- medications
- first-aid kit
- extra baby supplies
- nonperishable foods
- drinking water
- games and books

GOING TO A SHELTER

- nonperishable foods
- drinking water
- first-aid kit
- medications
- cash and credit cards
- flashlight and batteries
- battery operated radio
- manual can opener
- extra baby supplies
- games and books
- phone

With the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season officially beginning on June 1, local families need to know what to do and where to go should the threat of a hurricane (or any disaster) become real. The Ponte Vedra Recorder has pulled together a collection of resources to help readers prepare.

KEEP INFORMED

It’s important to keep informed when a hurricane or tropical storm threatens. Here are some resources.

Alert St. Johns

The Alert St. Johns emergency alerting system enables the county to quickly communicate with the public and provide critical and time-sensitive information for emergencies such as hurricanes, wildfires, evacuations, water advisories, missing persons and civil emergencies. By registering for Alert St. Johns, you can receive alerts via cell phone by voice or text, email addresses, home phone, business phone and more. To sign up, go to sjcfl.us/departments/emergency-mgmt and click on the Alert St. Johns link.

NOAA Weather Radio

The NOAA Weather Radio is the National Weather Service’s direct link to the public. The Specific Area Message Encoder (SAME)

allows weather radios to be programmed to warn only for specific locations. The SAME for St. Johns County is 12109. Frequencies for weather radios are as follows:

- 162.425 MHz if you are located south of International Golf Parkway
- 162.550 MHz if you are located north of International Golf Parkway

Wireless Emergency Alerts

WEA are emergency messages sent by authorized government alerting authorities through your mobile carrier. The alert system requires no need to download an app or subscribe to a service. The WEA message will usually provide the category and time, the agency issuing the alert and what action you should take.

Nixle Text Alert Service

St. Johns County Emergency Management is using Nixle Alerts to provide another way for

the public to stay updated with relevant information from the St. Johns County Emergency Operations Center. Nixle Text Alerts are not emergency weather alerts. Anyone can text StJohnsEOC to 888777 to opt-in to receive notifications through SMS text messages. Nixle does not charge for this service, but carrier message and data rates may apply.

- Other sources of information
- **Television Stations:** Local or national news stations monitor and broadcast weather alerts.
 - **AM/FM Radio:** Radio stations are required to air Emergency Alert System messages.
 - **Smartphone Applications:** Numerous free and paid smartphone applications have been created to notify the public of severe weather. Some of these applications use GPS tracking on your phone and will notify you of severe weather warnings based upon your location.

— Adapted from sjcfl.us/departments/emergency-mgmt

HURRICANE EVACUATION SHELTERS

St. Johns County public schools that meet current hurricane shelter standards serve as evacuation shelters during hurricanes. If possible, stay with friends or family or at a hotel outside the evacuated areas, as shelters are meant to be a last resort.

Note that the school closest to your home may not necessarily be an evacuation shelter. Keep updated on shelter availability during evacuation orders by checking the county’s website, social media, local radio or television stations, or by contacting the Department of Emergency Management at 904-824-5550.

General Shelters

- **Bartram Trail High School**
7399 Longleaf Pine Pkwy., St. Johns
- **Beachside High School**
200 Great Barracuda Way, St. Johns
- **Creekside High School**
100 Knights Lane, St. Johns
- **Cunningham Creek Elementary School**
1205 Roberts Road, St. Johns
- **Durbin Creek Elementary School**
4100 Race Track Road, St. Johns
- **Hickory Creek Elementary School**
235 Hickory Creek Trail, St. Johns
- **Mill Creek Elementary School**
3750 International Golf Pkwy., St. Augustine
- **Osceola Elementary School**
1605 Osceola Elementary Road, St. Augustine
- **Otis Mason Elementary School**
207 Mason Manatee Way, St. Augustine

- **Patriot Oaks Academy**
475 Longleaf Pine Pkwy., St. Johns
- **Pedro Menendez High School**
600 S.R. 206 W., St. Augustine
- **Tocoi Creek High School**
11200 St. Johns Pkwy., St. Augustine
- Pet-Friendly Shelters**
 - **South Woods Elementary School**
4750 S.R. 206 West Elkton
 - **Timberlin Creek Elementary School**
555 Pine Tree Lane, St. Augustine
- Special Needs Shelters**
 - **Freedom Crossing Academy**
1365 Shetland Drive, St. Johns
 - **Pacetti Bay Middle School**
245 Meadowlark Lane, St. Augustine

— Adapted from sjcfl.us/departments/emergency-mgmt

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GUEST COLUMN

Important concerns for homeowners as hurricane season begins



Wayne Terry

By Wayne Terry

Hurricane season started June 1, 2025, and ends on Nov. 30, 2025. The NOAA outlook predicts a likelihood of 13-19 named storms; six to 10 of those are likely to become hurricanes, and three to five of those are expected to be major hurricanes. Luckily, this is less than last year; however, it is a prediction.

By this time, we are all know to get prepared by getting plenty of water, food, gas, etc. However, what if your home or business is damaged?

If you own a home, you most likely have a regular homeowner's insurance policy. If a pipe breaks in your home, you are most likely covered for all but your deductible. However, if you have rising water due to a storm, your insurance policy, most likely, will not cover this.

When I think of Jacksonville I don't think "if" it's going to happen, I think "when" it's going to happen. I highly recommend purchasing a flood policy for your home whether or not the city says you are in a "flood zone."

As the owner of PuroClean Emergency Services, with most of the storm floods I come across, the building owner says "This has never happened to me before." Or: "This has never happened in this neighborhood before." It is important to know that if you have a flood policy it still might not cover all the costs associated with a flood; however, it will cover a good portion. This is something you should talk to your insurance agent about. Flood insurance is very inexpensive, and I would call this a great safety measure.

If your home or business is flooded from a storm, I would not recommend trying to take care of the damage yourself. Call a professional restoration company such as PuroClean Emergency Services.

Restoration companies deal with insurance companies all the time and know the proper ways to make sure your insurance company is taking good care of you. Do not take a fast payout offer as they are usually lower than what it

would cost to restore a property properly.

Although water losses are assigned a category of 1, 2, 3 and sometimes 4 (Not to be mixed up with the category of a hurricane), water coming in from the outside is always at least a 3 if not 4. This is because the water coming in from outside could have pesticides, animal urine, automobile oils and gases and other unknown ingredients. Anything this water touches should be discarded with the exception of structural items, which should be disinfected and dried out as soon as possible.

The last thing to know is that if FEMA is involved and your flood has been sitting there long enough to cause mold, FEMA will not cover mold-related activities. It is important to discuss this with your restoration company at the time of inspection so if there are any additional charges you know what they are.

Wayne Terry is the owner of PuroClean Emergency Services in Jacksonville. For more information about his restoration company go to www.PuroCleanES.com, email wterry@puroclean.com or call 904-573-3566.

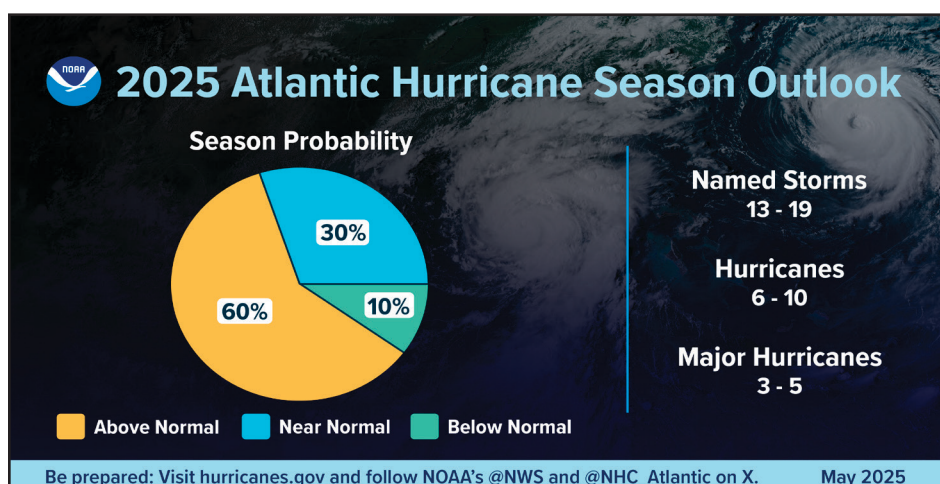


Image credit NOAA NWS

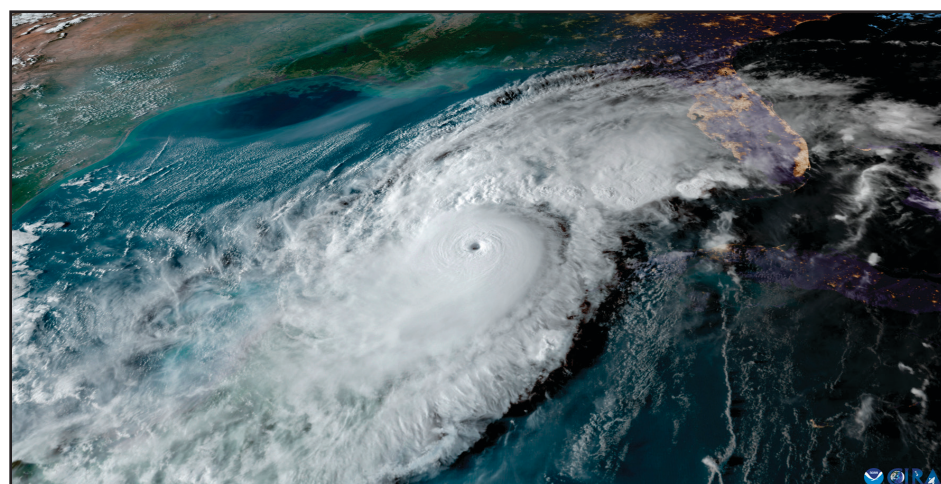


Image credit: NOAA

Image of Hurricane Milton from NOAA's GOES-16 satellite on Oct. 8, 2024.

NOAA predicts above-normal hurricane season

National Weather Service forecasters are predicting above-normal hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin this year.

NOAA's outlook for the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season predicts a 30% chance of a near-normal season, a 60% chance of an above-normal season and a 10% chance of a below-normal season.

The agency is forecasting between 13 and 19 named storms. Of those, six to 10 are forecast to become hurricanes, three to five of which are predicted to be major hurricanes (at least category 3).

Several factors contribute to this outlook, including continued ENSO-neutral conditions, warmer-than-average ocean temperatures, forecasts for weak wind shear and the potential for higher activity from the West African monsoon, a primary starting point for Atlantic hurricanes.

NOAA is improving its forecast communications, decision support and storm

recovery efforts this season. These include:

- NOAA's model, the Hurricane Analysis and Forecast System, will be upgraded, which is expected to result in a 5% improvement of tracking and intensity forecasts.
- NOAA's National Hurricane Center (NHC) and Central Pacific Hurricane Center will be able to issue tropical cyclone advisories up to 72 hours before the arrival of storm surge or tropical-storm-force winds on land.
- NOAA's Climate Prediction Center's Global Tropical Hazards Outlook, which provides advance notice of potential tropical cyclone risks, has been extended from two to three weeks.

Enhanced communication products

- NHC will offer Spanish-language text products to include the tropical weather outlook, public advisories, the tropical

cyclone discussion, the tropical cyclone update and key messages.

- NHC will again issue an experimental version of the forecast cone graphic that includes a depiction of inland tropical storm and hurricane watches and warnings in effect for the continental United States. The graphic will also highlight areas where a hurricane watch and tropical storm warning are both in effect.
- NHC will provide a rip current risk map when a tropical system is present. The map uses data provided by local National Weather Service forecast offices. Swells from distant hurricanes cause dangerous surf and rip current conditions along the coastline.

Innovative tools

- NOAA National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Services (NESDIS), in collaboration with NOAA's

Office of Marine and Aviation Operations and NOAA Research, is deploying a new, experimental radar system called ROARS on NOAA's P-3 hurricane hunter research aircraft. The system will scan beneath the plane to collect data on the ocean waves and the wind structure of the hurricane.

• NOAA Weather Prediction Center's experimental Probabilistic Precipitation Portal provides user-friendly access to see the forecast for rain and flash flooding up to three days in advance. In 2024, Hurricane Helene brought more than 30 inches of inland rainfall that was devastating and deadly to communities in North Carolina.

NOAA's outlook is for overall seasonal activity and is not a landfall forecast. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center will update the outlook in August prior to the historical peak of the season.

Article source: noaa.gov

Prepare yards, trees before storms arrive

Given the damaging impacts of hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton last year, you may want to prepare your landscape and trees for the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season — and the sooner the better.

“Best management practices include supporting soil health through appropriate fertilization, monitoring landscapes and trees for pests and disease, managing tree roots for health and structure etc.,” said Alyssa Vinson, urban forestry agent for UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County. “All management that leads to a healthier plant leads to a landscape that’s more resilient to disturbance. That doesn’t mean that a once-in-a-lifetime storm isn’t going to knock down a perfectly healthy tree, just that in normal circumstances a healthy tree is going to fare better.”

Home and business owners can take steps to make sure the trees can withstand tropical storm- and hurricane-force winds and rain, Vinson said. They include:

- Young trees need structural pruning more frequently until they are mature, when they may need little to no pruning.
- Look for dying, dead or broken branches.
- Keep an eye on trunks, especially for strange bulges, breaks, wounds or bark shedding.
- Check the ground around each tree and watch for areas of gradual sinking or rising in the soil — or mushrooms growing from the base of the tree, which can indicate a fungal infection. They are the fruiting body of an existing fungus.
- Contact a certified arborist for an evaluation far in advance of hurricane season.

“Well-established and mature trees are often very resilient,” Vinson said. “If you monitor them for concerns and have them structurally pruned by a certified arborist, you will maximize their ability to withstand storms.”

In addition to pruning your trees, property owners should trim their landscapes,

said Lynn Barber, the Florida-Friendly Landscaping (FFL) agent with UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County. Use pruners, not hedge shears, to cut shrubs back. Cutting back one-third of the plant will improve the aesthetics and health of the plant, Barber said.

FFL Director Claire Lewis also offered a few suggestions for getting your outdoor space ready for hurricanes:

- Bring in bird feeders and furniture.
- Clear gutters of debris.
- Secure plants and yard items.
- Turn off irrigation systems.
- Secure rain barrels to avoid excess water.

“A little prep now can save big headaches later,” Lewis said.





2025 Atlantic Tropical Cyclone Names

Andrea	Humberto	Olga
Barry	Imelda	Pablo
Chantal	Jerry	Rebekah
Dexter	Karen	Sebastien
Erin	Lorenzo	Tanya
Fernand	Melissa	Van
Gabrielle	Nestor	Wendy

Be prepared: Visit hurricanes.gov and follow NOAA's @NWS and @NHC_Atlantic on X.

May 2025

Image credit: NOAA NWS





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EVACUATION ROUTES

If called upon to evacuate during a hurricane, the route you take will depend upon where in the county you are. To find the zone in which you live, go to <https://www.sjcfl.us/evacuation-information>.

Consult the evacuation routes map. Make sure you understand your route and commit it to memory to avoid confusion at the time of an evacuation.

If you live in — or are otherwise located in — the areas below, here is where you should evacuate to:

City of St. Augustine (on the main-land): North on U.S. 1, turn west onto S.R. 16 or proceed south-west on S.R. 207 or south on U.S. 1, proceed to I-95 or points west.

City of St. Augustine (Davis Shores, Anastasia Island South to St. Augustine Alligator Farm): S.R. A1A, proceed west across Bridge of Lions, to U.S. 1 North or U.S. 1 South and/or to S.R. 16, or S.R. 207 to I-95 or points west.

City of St. Augustine and Anastasia Island north of the St. Augustine Amphitheater: Proceed north on S.R. A1A across the Bridge of Lions, then west.

City of St. Augustine and Anastasia Island south of the St. Augustine Amphitheater: Proceed south on S.R. A1A, turn west on S.R. 312, proceed across the S.R. 312 bridge to S.R. 207, proceed to I-95 or points west.

City of St. Augustine Beach: North to S.R. 312, proceed across the S.R. 312 bridge to S.R. 207, proceed to I-95 or points west.

From the intersection of Ocean Trace Road and A1A to Crescent Beach: South on S.R. A1A to Crescent Beach, turn west on S.R. 206, proceed across Crescent Beach Bridge to U.S. 1, proceed to I-95 or points west.

Crescent Beach to Flagler County line: North on S.R. A1A to Crescent Beach, turn west on S.R. 206, proceed across Crescent Beach Bridge to U.S. 1, proceed to I-95 or points west.

Palm Valley/Nocatee area: Proceed south-west to C.R. 210, proceed to I-95 or points west.

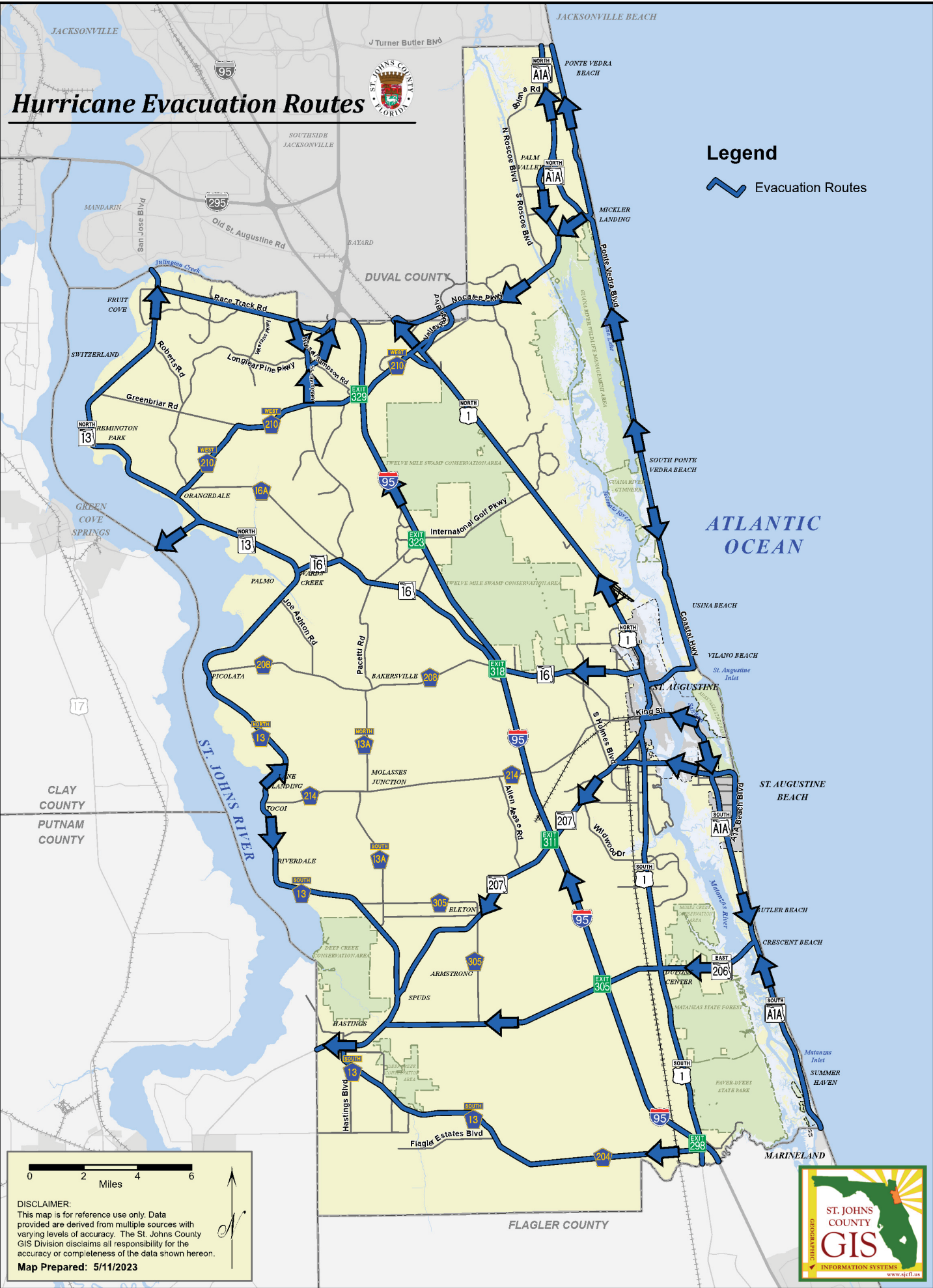
Ponte Vedra Beach/Sawgrass: North on S.R. A1A, turn west onto Butler Boulevard, proceed to I-95 or points west.

On coast halfway between Micklers Landing and South Ponte Vedra Beach: North of Guana Dam, go north to S.R. A1A, proceed west across Palm Valley Bridge on C.R. 210. South of Guana Dam, go south on S.R. A1A, proceed west across Vilano Bridge. Continue west on S.R. 16 to I-95 or points west.

ST. JOHNS RIVER

S.R. 13 north of C.R. 210: Proceed east along C.R. 210 or Greenbriar Road to I-95; or north along S.R. 13 into Duval County; or east on Racetrack Road to areas outside the evacuation zone.

S.R. 13 north of C.R. 214: Proceed east along C.R. 208 or S.R. 16 to I-95; or west along S.R. 16 across the Shands



Bridge; or east on C.R. 214 to areas outside the evacuation zone.

C.R. 13 south of C.R. 214: Proceed east along S.R. 207 or S.R. 206 to I-95; or west along S.R. 207 into Putnam County; or east on C.R. 214 to areas outside the evacuation zone.

Transportation Assistance

St. Johns County will assist residents

who need transportation to a shelter anytime an evacuation is ordered. There are three levels of evacuation assistance available:

1. Requires transportation only to a general population or pet-friendly shelter
2. Those with a special medical need who require transportation assistance to a special medical needs shelter
3. Those with a special medical need

that require a special medical needs shelter. Does not require transportation assistance.

Go to <https://www.sjcfl.us/evacuation-information/evacuation-assistance> for further information.

— Adapted from [sjcfl.us/departments/emergency-mgmt](https://www.sjcfl.us/departments/emergency-mgmt)

Post-storm clean-up tips to prevent dangers, damage

Floridians have started their annual storm season preparations by stocking up on needed supplies and securing their homes against potential storms. Experts encourage residents to also consider the potential damage and aftermath, as hidden dangers lie below.

Cleaning up and digging around fallen trees, broken fences and other debris may seem harmless, but if done incorrectly, it can lead to hitting underground utility lines. This can result in service interruptions, costly repairs, injuries or even worse. Digging without knowing what’s below is a disaster waiting to happen after the storm. That’s why it is the law in Florida to contact Sunshine 811 (sunshine811.com) before you dig.

Sunshine 811 is a free public service that alerts member utility companies to your dig so that they can mark underground facilities on your property. Simply go to DigSafeFlorida.com or call 811 two full business days before you start digging. If you hire a contractor to help you, make sure they contact 811, too. If the worst happens and you hit a utility line, do not touch it, attempt to fix it or cover it up. Contact the utility company immediately to avoid further danger.

“When a storm leaves a trail of broken fences, toppled trees and power outages in its wake, and recovery and clean up



Contributed photo

Downed trees

take center stage with little thought of anything else, we must remember that safety is a shared responsibility,” said Wendy Schaefer, education and awareness manager for Sunshine 811. “Calling 811 helps protect the people who dig, and their neighbors from injury and utility outages. It’s a simple phone call or online request to make sure a difficult situation isn’t made worse.”

Storm Cleanup and Restoration Tips

Sunshine 811 offers the following

storm clean up and restoration tips to prevent further outages, injuries and dangers:

- Avoid cutting above-ground lines running through trees or on the ground. These could still be live.
- Do not place debris in front of, around or over utility structures such as boxes, meters, pedestals and transformers.
- Before cutting away tree debris, check for buried lines tangled in the roots. If you see a line, do not touch it.

- Make sure you contact 811 before using a stump grinder to clear out fallen trees.
 - Get utility lines marked before replacing your fallen or damaged fence.
- By following these guidelines and contacting Sunshine 811 before you dig, you can protect yourself, your family and community from unnecessary harm.

About Sunshine 811

Sunshine 811 is the state’s go-to resource for education and training on safe digging processes. It’s also the organization the law requires you to call before starting any digging project. Sunshine 811 maintains a toll-free number and a 24/7 online system to notify its member utility companies of pending excavation projects so buried utility lines can be located and marked to protect the underground infrastructure.

It’s estimated that a utility line is damaged 85 times every day in Florida. Sunshine 811’s efforts are all about ensuring public safety and preventing underground utility damage. With Florida’s continued ranking as one of the top states in the country for construction activity and related jobs, safe digging in Florida and Sunshine 811’s role has never been more important.

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FPL offers hurricane preparedness checklist

It’s important to be proactive in planning for the six-month-long hurricane season. Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) urges Floridians to be prepared for this storm season and to be aware of potential safety hazards at all times.

Below is a checklist of important details to consider before, during and after a storm. For more tips, go to [FPL.com/storm](https://www.fpl.com/storm).

Create an emergency plan with your family

- Determine if your home or business is in a flood and/or evacuation zone and review evacuation routes.
- Determine your backup power source or make arrangements to relocate if a storm warning is issued.
- The state Division of Emergency Management recommends keeping gas tanks at least half full during hurricane season. For electric vehicles, make sure to maintain a 50% to 80% charge at all times.
- Contact your local emergency management office if you or anyone you know has special needs, in case of evacuations. Apply for FPL’s Medically Essential Service if someone in your home is dependent on electric-powered, life-sustaining medical equipment.

Build an emergency kit

- Check radio, flashlights and batteries that can support you in case you experience a power outage during a storm.



- Have a phone charger, power banks and a car charger available.
- Gather supplies such as non-perishable food, disposable dinnerware and utensils, medications and prescriptions, personal hygiene supplies, baby supplies, pet food, trash bags, toilet paper and soaps and detergents.
- Collect important documents and put them in a waterproof container — including insurance policies, health cards, birth certificates, Social Security cards, a list of important phone numbers and medications and a copy of your FPL bill.

Prepare your home

- Store outside objects inside, fasten doors and windows, cover valuables and furniture with plastic and move away from windows.

- Turn off and unplug any unnecessary electrical equipment, including pool equipment.
- If your roof or windows leak, water in your walls and ceiling may come into contact with electrical wiring. Immediately turn off your circuit breakers, disconnect all electrical appliances that are still plugged in and turn off all wall switches. Never stand in water while operating switches or unplugging any electrical device.
- Set your refrigerator and freezer to their coldest settings ahead of time to keep food fresh longer in the event of a power outage.
- Do not attempt to trim any vegetation growing on or near any overhead power lines. Only hire specially trained line-clearing professionals to trim trees and

other vegetation near power lines. Go to [FPL.com/trees](https://www.fpl.com/trees) for more information on FPL’s tree trimming policies.

- Look up and note the location of power lines before you begin working on a ladder. Be sure that ladders or scaffolds are far enough away so that you, and the ends of the tools you’re using, don’t come within 10 feet of main or neighborhood power lines.

Stay safe and informed

- If you use a portable generator, read and follow all the manufacturer’s instructions. Be sure to set it up outside — not in your home or garage — and connect appliances directly to it. Do not wire your generator directly to your breaker or fuse box, because the power you generate may flow back into power lines and cause injuries.
- Bookmark [FPL.com](https://www.fpl.com), download the FPL Mobile App and save 1-800-4-OUT-AGE (1-800-468-8243) to your cell phone to report and check the status of your restoration.
- Stay far away from and do not touch any downed power lines or flooded and debris-laden areas that may be hiding downed power lines. Call 911 and 1-800-4-OUTAGE (1-800-468-8243) if you see downed power lines or damaged electrical equipment.
- Follow local news and [@insideFPL](https://twitter.com/insideFPL) for updates on storm conditions and heed warnings.

BoatUS offers storm prep guidance for boaters

Recreational boaters whose vessels have been impacted by a hurricane and came out relatively unscathed know it all starts with a plan.

With the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season

underway, Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS) is offering free hurricane boat preparation information at [BoatUS.com/Hurricanes](https://www.boatus.com/Hurricanes).

Online help is available to every boat

owner (no BoatUS membership required), whether their vessel will have to weather the storm in the slip, stored ashore, on a boat lift, in canals, at marinas, boat clubs or hurricane holes.

The storm-planning help includes downloadable guides, videos and in-depth articles from BoatUS, the nation’s largest boating advocacy, services and safety group with more than 725,000 members and with more than 40 years of experience in hurricane preparedness for recreational vessels and post-storm recovery.

A video playlist includes nine hurricane preparation videos on a range of topics, making it easy to understand the steps to take, such as how to tie up your boat, how to set fenders, and what to do after a hurricane has come through.

If a named storm approaches, BoatUS.com/Hurricanes offers helpful up-to-the-minute storm tracking tools with live satellite images.

For more information, go to [BoatUS.com/Hurricanes](https://www.boatus.com/Hurricanes).



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The simplest way to begin a customized boat hurricane damage avoidance plan is to download the one-page Hurricane Planning worksheet, which will help you determine a boat’s storage and protection options and needs, including any special equipment such as chafe protection, shackles or extra line.

Also offered is the “BoatUS Magazine Hurricane Preparations Guide,” which offers proven tips and techniques, and the “Guide for Preparing Boats and Marinas for Hurricanes,” a helpful resource for marina and boat club staff, community resiliency managers and local government organizations that focus on protecting boating facilities.



GUEST COLUMN

Prepare, don't panic: Hurricane season tips from SERVPRO Team TMC

By Lauren Braddock
Florida Sales Director and Partner, SERVPRO Team TMC



Lauren Braddock
Hurricane season is upon us. Are you ready? Preparing your home keeps your family safe and limits the potential damage your property sustains. Here, we'll discuss hurricane preparedness and offer some tips for getting ready for a big storm.

Make plans.

Make an evacuation plan with multiple destinations and an emergency pack list. Keep emergency contacts in physical and digital formats. Make sure your family is familiar with the plan, and consider running evacuation drills. Next, stock up with seven days' worth of non-perishable food and bottled water, tools, flashlights, a radio, and extra batteries, clothes, bedding, plasticware, a waterproof container with important documents, games and comfort items, and first aid supplies, including prescriptions and personal hygiene items.

Take stock of your possessions.

Inventory your home before a hurricane hits, so you'll be ready if you need to file an insurance claim or apply for disaster aid. Review your insurance policy before a named storm occurs, so that you can make any necessary coverage adjustments.

Secure your home's exterior.

Hurricane winds can send debris flying. Secure windows, sliding glass doors and entryways with plywood or hurricane shutters to prevent breakage and interior damage. Keep wind and water out by sealing exterior vents with marine-grade

plywood, installing covers on outdoor electrical outlets, putting bibs on garden spigots and caulking around cables and pipes that penetrate the exterior wall of the house. Consider installing roof straps as well as reinforcing your garage door. Move anything that could become airborne, including furniture, planters, bikes, toys and other outdoor items to a secure location. Trim trees and branches so they won't break off during a storm. If you have a pool, cover it and secure the cover; if you have a shed, close and secure the door. Check your foundation and repair cracks, cover your outside HVAC components, and if you have a sump pump, test it ahead of time.

Get the interior.

Secure wall hangings, and take any outdoor art inside. Turn your refrigerator to the coldest setting to prevent spoilage in a power outage and remove fuses from your air conditioner to protect it from damage. If you need to evacuate, unplug all of your major appliances. If possible, move small electronics to a higher floor. Turn off the main water valve to the home, cut off the electricity at the circuit breaker, and turn off the gas at each appliance.

Vehicle prep

Fill the gas tanks and move your cars to higher ground or into your garage and away from trees and power lines.

If your Northeast Florida home is damaged in a hurricane or tropical storm, call SERVPRO of The Beaches/Ponte Vedra. Our highly trained restoration technicians have the experience and equipment to restore your Jacksonville, Jacksonville Beach or Ponte Vedra home to its pre-storm condition. A trusted leader in the water restoration industry, we've served our community for more than 40 years. Call 904-246-6118 or contact us through our website at servpro.com/locations/fl/servpro-of-jacksonville-beach-ponte-vedra/contact.

PET PREPAREDNESS

Don't forget about pets when preparing for a hurricane. Your disaster kits should be in easy-to-carry waterproof containers and stored in an accessible location. Here's a checklist.

- Your written family/pet disaster plan
- Crate/carrier and bedding
- Food, water, manual can opener and dishes
- Plastic bags, paper towels, newspaper
- Cleaning supplies, disinfectants
- Collar, leash, harness

- Muzzle, gauze rolls
- Identification tags
- Current medical and vaccination records
- Extra medications or copies of current prescriptions
- Current photos of you and your pet(s) together
- Pet comfort items: towels, blankets, toys
- A list of hotels, motels, shelters and

PET continues on Page 29

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Strengthen property, check insurance coverage

The 2025 Atlantic Hurricane Season officially began Sunday. Now is the time to strengthen your property to reduce potential damage and check your insurance coverage to make sure you are financially prepared if a storm damages your property, says the American Property Casualty Insurance Association (APCIA). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is forecasting an above-normal season.

“Natural disasters in recent years have caused billions of dollars in damages, which is a key reason why insurance costs have risen,” said Michael Richmond-Crum, senior director of personal lines at APCIA. “To help make insurance more affordable and available long-term, it is critical to increase the resiliency of homes and communities and reduce costly damage from severe weather. Many insurers offer premium discounts for certain steps that homeowners take to reduce the potential for damage from a storm. Discounts vary by company, so talk to your insurer or agent to see what discounts are available.”

The following steps are low-cost ways homeowners can strengthen their property for hurricane season:

- Start by checking around your home or business and trimming back any nearby branches or trees, especially ones

that hang over or close to your home.

- Inspect the roof and repair any loose or damaged shingles.

- Secure loose gutters and seal gaps and cracks around windows and doors to prevent water intrusion.

- Installing a wind-rated garage door or hurricane shutters and upgrading the home to the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety’s Fortified construction standard (see fortifiedhome.org) are additional measures to consider.

In recent years, costs to repair and rebuild homes and businesses after a natural disaster have risen significantly. In the last five years, the cost of construction labor has increased 36.3% while the cost of building materials are up 42.7%.

“As part of your hurricane season prep, take time to review your insurance policy and verify with your insurer or agent that your coverage is keeping pace with these cost increases,” added Richmond-Crum.

When reviewing your insurance policy, consider the following:

- Carefully review your policy limits and deductible (i.e., the amount you will pay out of pocket if you have a claim), and make adjustments, if needed, to ensure you have an appropriate amount of coverage to recover if your property is damaged. Raising your deductible is one way to potentially lower your premium,



but make sure you can afford the higher deductible and understand that any damage that falls below the deductible will be out of pocket.

- Ask if your policy pays replacement cost or actual cash value. Actual cash value takes depreciation into account and replacement cost is the amount necessary to rebuild your home with materials of like kind and quality up to policy limits.

- Consider adding key additional coverages, such as automatic inflation guard, extended replacement cost and building

code/ordinance coverage.

- Evaluate your need for flood insurance. Flood damage is typically not covered under a standard homeowner’s policy. Flood insurance is available as a separate policy through the National Flood Insurance Program or the private market.

Other steps to take to prepare for hurricane season:

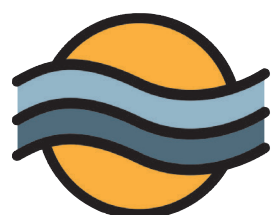
- Make a home inventory using your cell phone to take pictures and videos of your home and your home’s contents.

- Gather copies of your home, auto and flood insurance policies and keep them in a safe, accessible place.

- Save your insurer’s contact info to your phone’s contacts so you can easily and quickly start the claims process if your home is damaged.

- If your insurer has an app available, download it on to your phone for easy access to policy information.

APCIA is the primary national trade association for home, auto and business insurers. APCIA promotes and protects the viability of private competition for the benefit of consumers and insurers, with a legacy dating back 150 years. APCIA members represent all sizes, structures, and regions — protecting families, communities and businesses in the United States and across the globe.



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Understanding the hurricane categories

How severe is that hurricane you’re watching? The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale helps to describe that intensity at a glance.

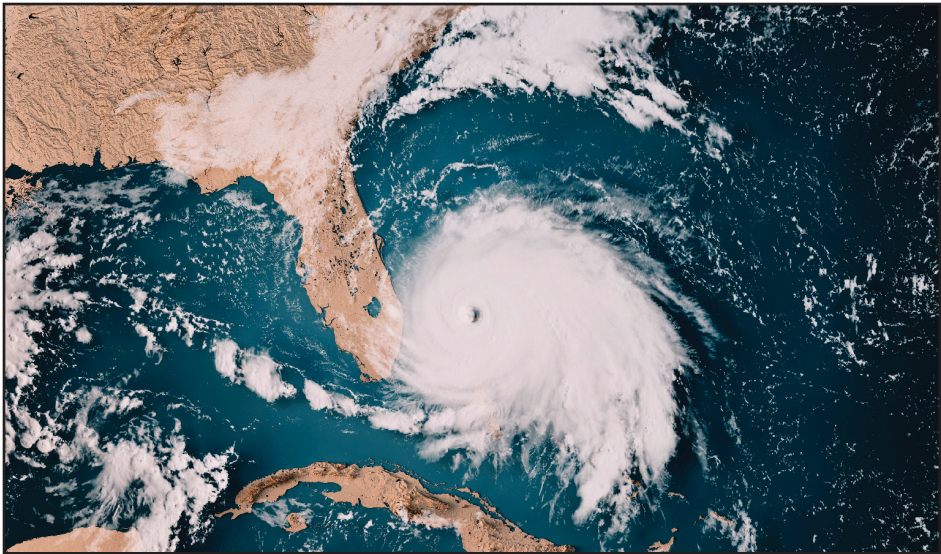
This rating of between 1 and 5 is based on a hurricane’s maximum sustained wind speed. That means it does not take into account other potentially deadly hazards such as storm surge, rainfall flooding and tornadoes.

The scale can help with estimates for potential property damage. While all hurricanes produce life-threatening winds, hurricanes rated Category 3 and higher are designated major hurricanes. These can cause devastating to catastrophic wind damage and a significant loss of life due to the strength of the winds.

Here’s a look at the categories:

Category 1: Sustained winds of 74-95 mph. This means well-constructed frame homes could have damage to the roof, shingles, vinyl siding and gutters. Large branches of trees will snap and shallowly rooted trees may be toppled. Extensive damage to power lines and poles could result in power outages that could last a few to several days.

Category 2: Sustained winds of 96-110 mph. This means well-constructed frame homes could sustain major roof and siding damage. Many shallowly rooted trees will be snapped or uprooted and block



roads. A near-total power loss is expected with outages that could last from several days to weeks.

Category 3: Sustained winds of 111-129 mph. This means well-built frame homes may take major damage or removal of roof decking and gable ends. Many trees will be snapped or uprooted, blocking roads. Electricity and water will be unavailable for several days to weeks after the storm passes.

Category 4: Sustained winds of 130-156 mph. This means well-built frame homes can sustain severe damage with a loss of most of the roof structure and

some exterior walls. Most trees will be snapped or uprooted and power poles will isolate residential areas. Power outages will last weeks to possibly months. Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks or months.

Category 5: Sustained winds of 157 mph or greater. This means a high percentage of frame homes will be destroyed, with total roof failure and wall collapse. Fallen trees and power poles will isolate residential areas. Power outages will last for weeks to months. Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks or months.

Pet

Continued from 27

- boarding kennels that accept pets
- Detailed instructions for animal care and rescue workers
 - First-aid kit for your pet(s)
 - Flashlights, batteries
 - Out-of-state telephone contact number
 - Label all pet supplies with your name, address and telephone number

What if your pet is a bird, reptile, amphibian or a small pet? See sjcfl.us/hurricane-preparedness.

— Adapted from sjcfl.us/departments/emergency-mgmt



A white J. Donovan AC service van is parked on a dirt path surrounded by lush tropical vegetation, including palm trees. The van features the company logo, name, and contact information. A large circular badge on the side of the van celebrates '30 YEARS' of experience. A 'Carrier' logo is also visible in the bottom left corner.

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The logo for J. Donovan AC features a stylized illustration of three palm trees of varying heights against a dark green circular background. Below the illustration, the company name 'J. Donovan AC' is written in a large, serif font, followed by 'QUALITY HVAC SERVICES' in a smaller, sans-serif font.

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A group photograph of the J. Donovan AC family, consisting of seven people (four adults and three children) standing outdoors in front of a building with palm trees in the background. They are all smiling and dressed in casual to semi-formal attire.

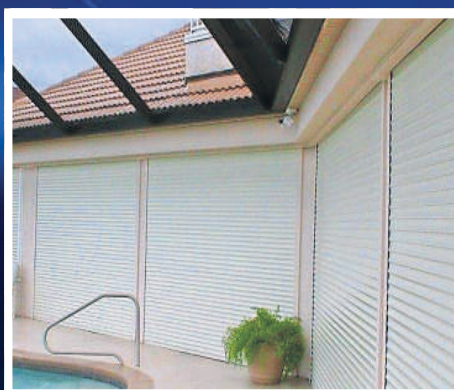
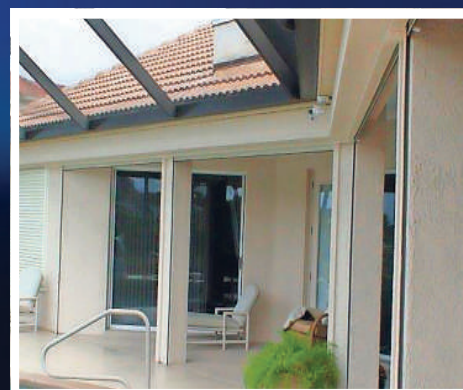
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Genevieve Rice dances after being recognized.



Jennifer Argentina, Exceptional Student Education program specialist, opens the ceremony.



Katie Cohenour shares a few words.

Life Work

Continued from 1

ment, social interaction and independent living, celebrated the end of the school year with a ceremony at Vicar's Landing at Oak Bridge on May 29.

"We come together to acknowledge the perseverance, achievements and inspiring growth of these young adults," said Jennifer Argentina, Exceptional Student Education program specialist. "They faced challenges that most people would not understand, but we are so ready for them to enter the workforce and the world, and now they are equipped with the skills knowledge and mindset to make that meaningful impact."

Ten students in the program were honored for their work as interns at Vicar's Landing where they spent time working in several departments, such as dining services, security and housekeeping.

"Life Work teaches transferable skills that will serve our interns in their future," teacher Laura Davis said. "The opportunities our interns have at Vicar's Landing are valuable, diverse and often involve experiences that they would otherwise not be exposed to."

She thanked the staff at Vicar's Landing for embracing the district's programs over the past three years and mentioned how they look forward to continuing the relationship into the future.

"The staff has embraced the standard of creating an inclusive workplace culture," Davis said. "This culture happens when people choose to have open minds and open hearts."

Another major aspect of the program success is the continued participation and support from the residents at Vicar's Landing, which saw its numbers double in size with 20 residents who volunteered their time as "member mentors," some of which were in attendance during the ceremony.

"From sharing hobbies to practicing interview skills, the member mentors never hesitate to promote community and connection," Davis said.

Some of the various hobbies shared included coins, croquet, boats and sewing.

Leslie Hodnett served as a member mentor for the first time and cherished the experience.

"It was a true honor to be a mentor, and I enjoyed every morning when I was walking my dogs and saw two school buses arriving and knew that you all were

arriving for the day," Hodnett said. "That was always fun for me and my dogs."

Hodnett looked back on a day when students learned how to operate sewing machines and worked on creating a quilt.

The finished quilt was presented to Vicar's Landing during the ceremony by representation from the Jacksonville Modern Quilt Guild, who were involved in making the event happen.

"You brought enthusiasm, fresh perspective and genuine compassion to our members here at Vicar's, and for that we are truly thankful," Vicar's Landing executive director Elizabeth Sholar said. "Your presence here reminds us why mentorship and leadership are so vital for our community. You are the future, and we know that we are in capable hands."



A quilt that students worked on was presented to Vicar's Landing at Oak Bridge during the ceremony by representation from the Jacksonville Modern Quilt Guild.



Photos by Anthony Richards

It was a day of recognition for all the work the students had done during the school year.

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Gala will raise funds to help homeless youth

Port in the Storm Homeless Youth Center is celebrating six years of service with the inaugural Keys of Hope Gala, a fundraiser that directly supports unhoused youth in the community.

Port in the Storm provides critical services to unaccompanied young adults experiencing the devastating effects of housing insecurity. Keys of Hope Gala will be 6-10 p.m. Saturday, June 28, at Ancient City Farmstead, 395 St. Marks Pond Blvd., St. Augustine.

“The Keys of Hope Gala is going to be a blast, but its core purpose is to support our critical work at Port in the Storm Homeless Youth Center,” said Joy Case, director of development at St. Augustine Society Inc. “It helps one of our most

vulnerable populations, who are coping with very complex situations. Thanks to the support of our donors, 100% of the youth in our program are currently engaging in therapy, 85% are employed and several are working towards college and/or enlisting in the military. We don’t just feed our clients, let them stay a night and then send them back to the streets. Our professional staff works to create an individualized plan with long-term solutions to help them find safe, permanent and stable housing.”

Port in the Storm opened its doors in June 2019 with 16 beds. After consistently being over census, the St. Augustine Society added eight more beds in 2024. In 2025, an average of 28 to 32

youth stay at the center each night. Port in the Storm Homeless Youth Center does not turn away any unhoused youth, instead creating space utilizing cots to prevent them from sleeping on the streets. The program also helps provide a path forward through life skills training, job-readiness assistance, help in securing long-term housing and the support of a trusted adviser.

The Keys of Hope Gala guests can enjoy a spread by Bronx House Pizza, accompanied by a signature cocktail, beer and wine. The event features music, dancing, a silent and live auction and a key raffle where guests can purchase keys that may match a chest stuffed with treasures.

Event sponsors include Bronx House Pizza, Ancient City Farmstead, Ameris Bank, Ancient City Accounting and CVB Cares.

To purchase tickets, donate or inquire about sponsorships, go to stfrancissshelter.org/2025events.

“I grew up in an underprivileged family with an abusive father, so I would volunteer every day after school to get away from home,” says Bruno DiFabio, owner of Bronx House Pizza. “The St. Augustine Society is near and dear to my heart — we cook for them monthly and take any opportunity we can to be involved. I’m a huge advocate for being involved in the local community. We’re honored to help with the Keys of Hope Gala.”

EPIC opening new office in Palencia Commons

EPIC Behavioral Healthcare (EPIC) is expanding service locations by opening a new office in the Palencia Commons.

The new office will provide support to individuals dealing with mental health and substance use challenges.

The new location is at 352 Paseo Reyes Drive, St. Augustine, and will open July 1. Office hours will be 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays.

The location has direct access to U.S. 1 and International Golf Parkway, which will offer convenience for residents of northern St. Johns County to obtain:

- Counseling for mental health and substance use disorders
- Psychiatric services
- Crisis access support
- Care coordination
- Support for anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns
- Outpatient therapy tailored for everyone: Children (ages 4 and older), adolescents, adults, families and couples
- Prevention programs for youth and parents, including: engaging interventions for adolescents, vaping education,

parenting education, anger management classes, Think! For Success and youth peer support services.

The new office will offer a safe and supportive environment where healing and recovery can flourish. EPIC is recognized for its dedicated team of compassionate professionals who deliver person-centered care and respect everyone’s unique journey. With this expansion, EPIC’s goal is to make it easier for everyone to get the help they need and to build a stronger foundation for lasting wellness in the community.

EPIC has been serving the community since 1973 and is CARF accredited and licensed by the Florida Department of Children and Families. EPIC served more than 6,000 people last year and has four other locations in St. Johns and Flagler counties.

For more information, go to epicbh.org.

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Business Weekly

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www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

Ascension St. Vincent's offers Ponte Vedra students robotic training

Ascension St. Vincent's is helping Ponte Vedra High School students learn more about their career opportunities and possibilities in health care during its Operation HERO (Health, Education, Resources, Opportunities) event where they received hands-on experience with the latest medical technology and learned more about the industry from St. Vincent's physicians, nurses and care teams.

Students tested the da Vinci 5, the newest robotic surgical system that offers advanced features for minimally invasive surgery. St. Vincent's Riverside was one of the first hospitals in the world to receive the system. The students fished for toy sharks using the system, giving them insight into the manual dexterity required to perform a procedure. They also used another da Vinci console to participate in a simulated training game.

"It's allowing me to see all the new technology that's coming about and what I'm going to be working with when I get



The Ponte Vedra High School students who took part in the Operation HERO event.

to medical school," said Matthew Jones, a junior at Ponte Vedra High School. "I'm so grateful that I go to a school where I can actually see this stuff."

Dr. Martin Martino, a gynecological

oncologist at St. Vincent's Riverside, who specializes in robotic surgery, said bringing the OR to the classroom is one of his passions and he hopes these events help students think differently about health care

as a potential career path.

"As they consider their future careers, we want to inspire them," Martino said. "We want them to think: 'I can do anything, the future is unlimited; I just have to have the ability to dream and then make that a reality.'"

Michelle Meyer, a math teacher at Ponte Vedra High School, collaborated with Martino to organize this event for students. Meyer said the event is a launching pad for students preparing to graduate from high school and move to the next stage of their lives.

"It is so essential that we build a community with our kids and us just having these conversations with people outside of the school," Meyer said. "It just builds that relationship piece that is crucial inside the classroom."

School and hospital leaders are planning to make this an annual event for students at the school.



GUEST COLUMN

When things seem out of control, control things you can

Contributed photo

Written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors

During times of heightened stress, such as when there's extreme market volatility, a person can quickly become overwhelmed and struggle to do things that might be considered simple or obvious. It can be helpful to focus on the things you can control, identify actions that you can take and complete those action steps.

Here are four action items for you to consider:

1. Review your investment plan

Before you start making changes to your investment portfolio, consider your goals. Are you saving for retirement? Do you need to build a college fund for your children? Did a recent event create a need to adjust your plan?

If your goals have changed or if you haven't updated your plan in a while, review and, if necessary, update your investment strategy to support reaching your goals.

2. Understand your risk tolerance

Risk is a key principle in investing. Some investments are riskier than others, but every financial decision involves



risk. Since risk is inescapable, the key is to understand your risk tolerance and manage how much you are taking, which should be based on your long-term financial goals. If your tolerance for risk has changed, review your strategy and make sure you are still comfortable with the amount of risk you're taking.

3. Stick to your plan

When the market gets volatile, investors often react emotionally and may want to pull out of the market to try to avoid loss. However, remember that moving or selling investments during a market decline will likely lock in losses; stay-

ing invested may allow you to benefit if the market comes back. Before reacting, take time to step back and try to respond using logic rather than emotion.

4. Organize and update important documents

Are your important documents up-to-date and accessible to those who may need them?

Create a reference list of your documents and consider making a digital version for easy storage and accessibility. Also ensure that your beneficiary designations for investment accounts, life insurance and other accounts are up-to-date

to reflect any new circumstances such as marriage, birth, death or divorce. Beneficiary designations typically supersede your will or trust, so you'll want to confirm that they are current and accurate.

Our firm does not provide legal or tax advice. Be sure to consult with your tax and legal advisers before taking any action that could have tax consequences. Any estate plan should be reviewed by an attorney who specializes in estate planning and is licensed to practice law in your state.

This article was written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors and provided courtesy of Ponte Vedra Wealth Management Group in Ponte Vedra Beach at 904-273-7918.

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The property at 3733 University Boulevard W.

NAI Hallmark Brokers \$4.1M sale on University Boulevard West

NAI Hallmark, Jacksonville’s largest locally owned commercial real estate brokerage and property management firm, has announced the sale of 3733 University Boulevard W. in Jacksonville.

Partner and Senior Vice President Daniel Burkhardt and investment sales analyst Alex Caliel represented the seller, Brightway Ventures LLC. The buyer, New Age Properties LLC, acquired the property for \$4.1 million.

The property consists of a three-story,

multi-tenanted office building totaling 87,180 gross square feet. It is situated on 5.7 acres of land, and is in close proximity to Interstate 95, U.S. 1, San Jose Blvd and J. Turner Butler Boulevard, providing easy access to the entire Jacksonville MSA.

For more information about the sale or inquiries regarding investment real estate opportunities across Northeast Florida, contact Burkhardt at db@naihallmark.com

Baptist Health welcomes new board members, chairs

Baptist Health has announced the appointment of a new chair, vice chair and two new members to the Board of Directors of Baptist Medical Center Clay. The health system also welcomes new members to the Board of Managers of Baptist Physician Partners (BPP), its physician-led, clinically integrated network dedicated to providing coordinated, high-quality care to patients, and to Baptist Physician Partners ACO, a subsidiary of BPP focused on caring for patients with Medicare.

Baptist Health is the only locally governed, faith-based, not-for-profit health care system in Northeast Florida. Its boards are comprised of local leaders and Baptist Health professionals, including physicians who provide clinical expertise, operational insight and quality and safety oversight.

Made up of volunteers with diverse skills, knowledge and experience, the boards play an important role in guiding Baptist Health’s commitment to expanding access to high-quality care and improving health and wellness in our community, today and for generations to come.

“With their insightful leadership, diverse perspectives and unified dedication to excellence, our boards are instrumental in guiding the long-term direction of our health system,” said Michael A. Mayo, president and CEO at Baptist Health. “As part of the communities we serve, they volunteer their time and expertise to help us improve access to exceptional care and ensure we are prepared to meet future health needs in the region.”

The newly appointed board members will serve three-year terms.

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Vested Metals founder named Small Business Person Of The Year

The Small Business Association (SBA) North Florida District has recognized Vested Metals International President and Founder Viv Helwig as the Small Business Person of the Year.

The SBA awards recognize outstanding small business owners from across the nation and are part of its National Small Business Week celebration, which took place May 4-10.

Helwig was honored at the 33rd Annual Small Business Week Celebration on May 9 at the University of North Florida.

“Receiving this award is a proud moment for Vested Metals International,” Helwig said. “It underscores our commitment to quality, integrity, community engagement and customer satisfaction. We are grateful for the support of our community and customers, and we will continue to strive for excellence in all that we do. We truly couldn’t achieve this humbling milestone without the

collaboration of our employees, suppliers, contractors, community, partners of any kind, and ultimately the opportunity our customers give us. We are always striving to improve and excel.”

A 2008 graduate of Flagler College, Helwig chose to set down roots in St. Augustine, where he has built Vested Metals into one of the fastest-growing privately held companies in the world, receiving numerous accolades from Inc.’s 5000

Helwig was previously named Minority-Owned Small Business Person of the Year in 2020, and North Florida and Florida Small Business Exporter of the Year in 2022 by the SBA for the northern region of Florida.

Helwig is committed to creating and expanding economic opportunity in St. Johns County. The charitable arm of Vested Metals, The Vested Metals Community Foundation, works to raise funds for a variety of nonprofit

organizations that are near and dear to Helwig, including United Way of St. Johns County, THE PLAYERS Championship Boys & Girls Club and K9s For Warriors. Helwig and his team aim to raise and donate \$1 million in 10 years through its annual golf tournament, The Southeast Coil Classic.

Helwig acknowledges there is uncertainty in the market at the moment, but he is ready to tackle it with thought and integrity.

“We know many companies have a lot of questions around market uncertainties and tariffs in particular,” Helwig says. “Although we’ve been here before, it still takes navigating intentionally, and we feel that our experienced team is well-positioned to help our customers do just that. We have a strong inventory base and are positioned well to support our customers cost-effectively while we await more clarity on tariffs.”



Contributed photo

The Small Business Association North Florida District has recognized Vested Metals International President and Founder Viv Helwig as the Small Business Person of the Year.

UF Health St. Johns moves to new health record system

UF Health St. Johns has successfully implemented Epic, one of the most advanced electronic health record systems in the country. This major milestone, which included UF Health Flagler Hospital and 20 outpatient practice locations throughout St. Johns and Flagler counties, enhances care coordination, patient safety and operational efficiency across all areas of care and brings the region fully onto the shared platform used throughout the rest of UF Health.

Kerry Watson, interim CEO of UF Health St. Johns, emphasized that the technological advances provided by Epic will help consolidate care across the UF Health system into a single,

unified patient record.

“Implementing Epic was guided by our commitment to put patients first,” said Watson. “This is more than an upgrade to technology, it’s a transformation in how we care for patients. This technology will bring our teams closer together and patients will benefit from more seamless care, whether they are seen at UF Health Flagler Hospital, one of our primary care or specialty practices, or the surgical center.”

The 10-month integration process involved converting all patient records and scheduling systems into a unified EHR across the organization.

“We’re incredibly proud of our teams

who worked tirelessly to bring Epic to life throughout UF Health St. Johns,” said Gigi Lipori, senior vice president and chief information officer for UF Health. “Our IT teams, educators and clinical and nonclinical team members worked tirelessly to ensure a smooth transition, and we’re grateful for the support we received from throughout UF Health to make this possible. Their dedication is already making a difference for patients and providers.”

The new system also gives patients access to MyUFHealth, a secure online portal where they can view test results, upcoming appointments and medication lists, schedule appointments, participate in virtual visits and much more.

Additionally, MyUFHealth links patient records across all UF Health locations, ensuring patients can connect seamlessly with and access their health information.

This Epic implementation is part of a broader strategic initiative at UF Health to ensure that every patient, regardless of their geography, receives high-quality, integrated care. With this milestone, the hospital and practices that make up UF Health St. Johns are better equipped than ever to meet the evolving needs of its patients and community.

For more information about UF Health St. Johns’ transition to Epic, go to stjohns.ufhealth.org/patient-portal.

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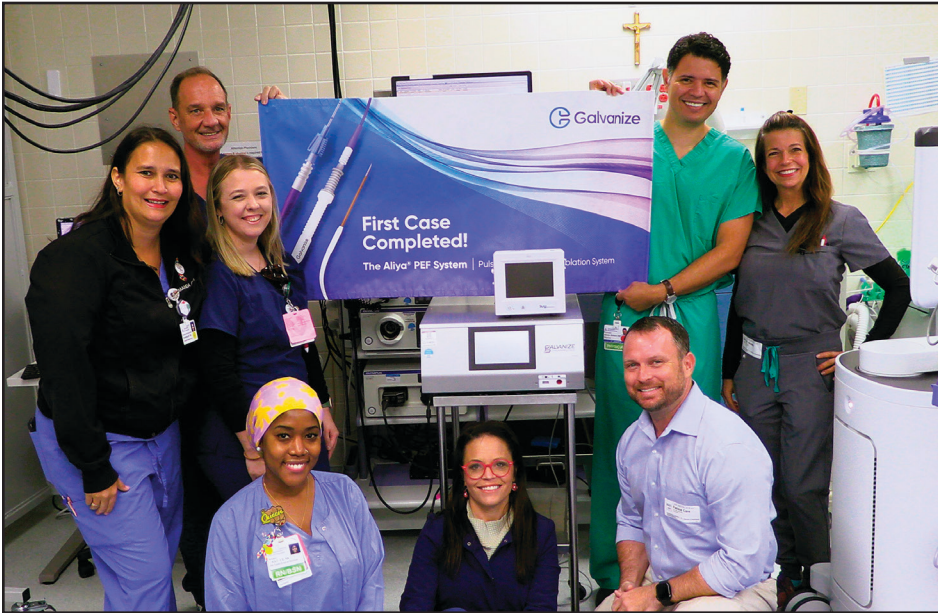
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The pulmonology team



Contributed photos

Riverside medical staff use the Galvanize Aliya System.

Ascension St. Vincent’s Riverside offers new lung cancer treatment

St. Vincent’s Riverside now offers new technology that targets lung tumors through a minimally invasive procedure that improves patient outcomes while reducing discomfort and recovery time.

The Galvanize Aliya System delivers high-voltage, short-duration electrical energy to destroy lung tumors while preserving healthy tissue in the surrounding area. Preclinical and early clinical trial data indicate that the non-thermal cell death triggered by PEF might release proteins (antigens) that could activate the

body’s immune response, potentially preventing the formation of future tumors.

“We are committed to investing in innovative technology that increases access to life-saving care our community deserves,” said Scott Kashman, president and CEO of St. Vincent’s Riverside. “This system will help them battle lung cancer more effectively while also allowing them to breathe easier and get back to their lives more quickly.”

“This new ablation technology improves our ability to remove tumors


from the lungs,” said Dr. Akram Shibani, pulmonologist at St. Vincent’s Riverside. “Providing this treatment in a minimally invasive, outpatient procedure is a game-changer for our patients.”

This treatment can replace the need to surgically remove part of the lung (lobectomy). PEF treatment is performed as an outpatient procedure and patients are often able to return home on the same day. A lobectomy typically requires several days of recovery in the hospital and weeks more at home.

St. Vincent’s Riverside was recognized as a Best Regional Hospital by the U.S. News and World Report for 2024-25. The hospital also received a Patient Safety Excellence Award for 2025 from Healthgrades.

For more information about lung care at St. Vincent’s Riverside, go to health-care.ascension.org/locations/florida/fljac/jacksonville-ascension-st-vincents-riverside/departments/dillon-building/lung-institute.

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Benchmarks of Success

A look at major career developments in the area



Dr. Mei Zhao

Zhao appointed dean of Brooks College of Health

The University of North Florida has announced the appointment of Dr. Mei Zhao as dean of the Brooks College of Health (BCH) following a highly impactful tenure as interim dean. A nationally recognized leader in health administration education

and research, Zhao brings more than 30 years of academic excellence, strategic vision and global engagement experience to the role.

Since stepping in as interim, Zhao led BCH through a period of remarkable growth and momentum. Under her leadership, the college achieved a more than 10% increase in student enrollment, launched the innovative Doctor of Health Administration program and secured more than \$4.7 million in private funding along with approximately \$1.1 million from the state's Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) initiative to support student success and academic innovation.

Additionally, the college's physical therapy program earned a 10-year reaccreditation, reaffirming its status

as a top-tier program in the region.

Zhao first joined the UNF faculty in 2004. Previously as chair of the Department of Health Administration, Zhao led the successful reaccreditation of both the Master of Health Administration (MHA) and Bachelor of Health Care Management programs through 2030.

Zhao has authored more than 70 peer-reviewed publications and secured more than \$1.5 million in research and education funding.

Bruno named at 1912 Ocean Bar & Rooftop mixologist

Ajuana "AJ" Bruno has joined Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa as the new mixologist for 1912 Ocean Bar & Rooftop, bringing a vibrant infusion of Caribbean flavors and Southern hospitality to the resort's signature beachside venue.

A first-generation American with deep Caribbean roots, Bruno draws on her heritage to craft cocktails that are as rich in tradition as they are in taste. Her passion for hospitality and mixology blossomed in 2020, when she immersed herself in the craft through conferences, master classes and mentorships.

For more information about 1912 Ocean Bar and Rooftop, go to 1912oceanbarandrooftop.com.

Crowley names Moriarty to Land Transportation position

Crowley has named Gunnar Moriarty vice president of commercial operations for its Land Transportation business unit, focused on advancing the company's

inland end-to-end trucking and intermodal solutions across North America.

With nearly two decades of experience across the transportation and logistics sectors, Moriarty is leading the strategic business growth of Crowley's trucking and brokerage services for customers. He will focus on integrating innovative technologies to strengthen Crowley's position in the brokerage sector and drive business development focused on customer solutions that can leverage Crowley's comprehensive logistics offerings.

Moriarty earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

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Layered greenery creates a dramatic, welcoming entrance.



Before and after: A full paver driveway adds durability and custom design to the front yard.

The Landscape Guy grows a business rooted in experience

By Holly Tishfield

Alex Howell began his company, The Landscape Guy, in 2022 after a decade of working corporate America jobs. He'd always worked landscaping jobs on the side, but after he reached his breaking point with inadequate pay and treatment at his latest corporate job, he recognized that it was time to make a change.

"I said, you know what, I'm going to open my own company. I did it in Arkansas and I'm going to do it again here in Florida," Howell said.

Howell put 20-plus years of landscaping experience to good use when he opened The Landscape Guy, a company specializing in residential landscaping, irrigation services, custom outdoor designs, intricate hardscaping and creating

beautiful, functional outdoor spaces.

He likes to joke that the company does "everything besides mowing the lawn," from paver/hardscaping installation and repair to garden and plant installation, from turf and putting green installation to fountains and water features.

Howell and his team make it their mission to make their customers' dreams come true.

"We truly care about our business," he said. "Every plant we plant is with nutrients, bone meal and cow manure, not just sandy topsoil."

When it comes to current North Floridian landscaping trends, Howell said that low-maintenance landscaping is all the rage. Whether that's low-maintenance tropical scaping or desert-inspired scenery, customers are interested in a



Contributed photos
A clean look elevated with fresh sod, structured beds and tropical plantings.

design that won't consume their time yet still bring that polished, beautiful appeal to their outdoor spaces.

He also noted that customers are leaning more towards rocks for landscaping beds as opposed to traditional mulch, given that the likelihood of weeds is near obsolete.

"Customers don't want to spend time in their gardens anymore," Howell said. "They want to come home and see that their landscaping looks spectacular."

The Landscaping Guy services the St. Johns and Duval counties areas with a team of trustworthy, dedicated employees who bring the same level of care and dedication to their work that Howell does.

"I feel like we've been doing very well," Howell said. "We're very blessed."

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In the Arts

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Beaches arts gala raises \$70K for programs

First Coast Cultural Center celebrated its “Year of the Pearl,” marking 30 years of prosperity as a nonprofit organization with a Grecian-themed fundraiser at TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse. The 6th Annual Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts gala was a sell-out event and raised \$70,000 through donations, partnerships and ticket sales.

According to Fundraising Manager Kimberly Sheridan, the May 4 fundraiser featured an awards presentation, art demonstrations and a silent auction, and it supported the continuation of the center’s high-quality educational art programs for all ages.

“This includes children’s summer camps, after-school programming, and a potpourri of community engagement events,” said Sheridan.

Sheridan said donations were made specifically to the center’s Sound Connections Music Therapy program for children with disabilities. This program is offered

free to St. Johns County students, including Title I schools, and \$14,000 more is needed to reach the goal to maintain this year’s service.

“This program is supported only through grants and individual donations that FCCC acquires,” said Silvia Romero, senior operations director. “Community support for this program for children with disabilities is a must.”

Go to firstcoastculturalcenter.org/programs-events/sound-connections-r for more information.

In the area of recognition at the gala, Dr. Arun Gulani, world-renowned eye surgeon from Gulani Vision Institute, was master of ceremonies and presented awards to individuals, businesses and organizations who go above and beyond to enhance the arts.

Honorees included: Volunteer of the Year, Barbara Moore Wedow; Community Impact Award, Bold City Opera; Emerging Artist Award, Christine Alfano; Art of

Giving Award, Becky Jewett; #Gulanism Award, Chef Marcel Vizcarra; Irene Lazzara Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts Award, Ana Cristina Paz; and Ron & Hilah Autrey Arts Education & Advocacy Award, Sunni Myers.

Other speakers included Ben Becker, Action News Jax anchor; Romero; FCCC Board member Mike Story; and Candice Sirak, Sound Connections Music Therapy manager. Event sponsors were the Lazzara Family Foundation, Ron and Hilah Autrey, Gulani Vision Institute, Tom Bush Family of Dealerships, Publix Super Markets Charities and PNC Bank.

Looking ahead, Sheridan is planning the center’s first Artisan Fall Festival on Oct. 4, the annual Holiday Shoppes on Nov. 15-16, and the Luxury Coach and Lights Tour on Dec. 5. For more information, contact Sheridan at 904-280-0614, Ext. 1205, or ksheridan@firstcoastculturalcenter.org.



Contributed photo

Chef Marcel Vizcarra with Dr. Arun Gulani at First Coast Cultural Center gala. Vizcarra won the #Gulanism Award.



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Teen artwork explores creative responses to anxiety

The Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville (MOCA), a cultural institute of the University of North Florida, will present the exhibition “Fearless,” featuring teen artwork exploring creative responses to anxiety.

This exhibition offers a rare, vulnerable glimpse into the inner world of adolescents and honors their bravery in stepping forward.

“Fearless” showcases the artwork of 80 students from LaVilla School of the Arts and Episcopal School of Jacksonville, created through a mental health-centered curriculum designed by JACK Mental Health Advocacy. Using therapeutic prompts and conversation starters provided by JACK, teachers guided their students in exploring themes of anxiety, inner resilience, identity and emotional expression — all through art.

JACK is a partner in #IGETIT, a national Mental Health Awareness Month campaign by Kevin Bacon’s nonprofit SixDegrees.org that’s bringing people together to normalize mental health conversations and share accessible tools for well-being. #IGETIT, is a community of nonprofits and advocates uplifting mental health stories, amplifying organizations and flooding social media with accessible resources that meet people where they are in their journey.

You can participate by sharing your own #IGETIT moment or explore the #IGETIT Mental Health Resource Guide at sixdegrees.org.short.gy/jackmha, a curated collection of books, podcasts, videos, hotlines and other tools to support mental well-being.

“Fearless” is on view at MOCA Jacksonville through June 10, closing out Mental

Health Awareness Month.

About JACK Mental Health Advocacy

JACK is a nonprofit created to change the way those with OCD anxiety and their families navigate the challenges of mental illness, fight stigma and obtain quality education, support and treatment.

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States, affecting 40 million adults. OCD affects 1% to 2% of the population globally. Consequently, it is surprising that those with OCD and anxiety and their families lack the resources they need to navigate myriad challenges effectively.

JACK’s goal is to remove that gap in information and programming.

About SixDegrees.org

SixDegrees.org is a 501(c)3 that has been harnessing good since 2007. It was founded by Golden Globe-winning actor, musician and philanthropist Kevin Bacon on the principle that everyone is in need of connection.

SixDegrees supports impactful initiatives to sustain and enrich local communities. Its work centers on youth empowerment, justice and equality, and improving a sustainable living environment.

For more information about MOCA, including hours of operation, admission prices and upcoming exhibitions and programs, call 904-366-6911 or go to mo-jacksonville.unf.edu.

Children’s chorus to perform abroad during summer tour

The Jacksonville Children’s Chorus Touring Choir is set to embark on an international journey, July 11-20. Under the direction of President and Artistic Director Darren Dailey, the ensemble will travel to Greece and Turkey, showcasing their musical talents on a global stage.

The Touring Choir will perform in Athens, Volos and other international destinations. Beyond the stage, choir members

will explore the Greek Isles, including visits to Mykonos and Santorini.

In previous seasons, the Touring Choir has performed across countries such as Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, Norway, Iceland and Germany. These tours provide valuable performance experience and meaningful cultural engagement for participating members.

“I’m incredibly excited to experience the

stunning sights in Greece,” said Maura, a member of the Touring Choir. “I’ve always been fascinated by Greek culture and mythology, so I’m especially looking forward to seeing the Parthenon and other historic landmarks I wouldn’t have the chance to see otherwise.”

This tour represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the young artists to grow musically and culturally. Community

members are encouraged to support the chorus’s fundraising efforts to help cover travel expenses and ensure all singers can participate.

Contributions can be made by contacting the finance office at 904-353-1636 ext. 2 or by donating online at jacksonvillechorus.dppro.net/2025-Summer-Tour-Donations.

Next Sunday at Stetson’s concert is June 8

On June 8, Sundays at Stetson’s will present Jeanie Fitchen and Jim Bickerstaff at Beluthahatchee.

As a young teenager Fitchen found her niche in the simple beauty and artistic style of traditional music from around the world. Throughout the years, however, she began to write and record her own songs, earning a 1999 Grammy nomination for her CD, “Roads,” in the category of Best New Folk Album.

For her long-standing contributions to the folk cultural resources of the state, Fitchen received a Florida Folk Heritage Award in 2001. For the songs she has written and sung in praise and defense of Florida’s natural and cultural heritage, she was honored with The Fellow Man and Mother Earth Award by The Stetson Kennedy Foundation in 2010. And in recognition of her legacy of performances as a Florida singer-songwriter and for her contributions to the Florida Folk Festival, she was inducted into the 2016 Florida Folk Festival’s Legends and Legacy Hall of Fame.

As an independent producer and engineer, Bickerstaff worked with Jupiter Coyote, Chief Jim Billie, Sarah McCulloch, Fitchen, Mindy Simmons, Raiford Starke, Joey Errigo, Clyde Walker, Sam Pacetti, Vassar Clements, John McEuen, Bela Fleck, Up-

sala and hundreds of other Indie artists.

As a writer and performer, Bickerstaff has released three albums of his music with some of the best musicians in the business.

Music starts at 2 p.m. No reservations necessary. A \$10 donation is suggested to help support the presentation of live local music.

Beluthahatchee is located a quarter mile south of Roberts Road at 1523 S.R. 13, Fruit Cove. (The concert is held at the Hart House at the end of the short dirt road.)

To schedule a tour of Beluthahatchee, call 904-549-9444.

For more information, email sundaysatstetsons@gmail.com.

Future Concerts:

- July 13: Woody Guthrie Tribute
- Aug. 10: Lee Hunter & Joey Kerr
- Sept. 14: Dave Besley & Sue Westcott
- Oct. 12: Bear And Robert
- Nov. 9: Ron & Bari
- Dec. 14: Feed Your Neighbor Food Drive

Rise at Nocatee Arts & Craft Fair

Friday, June 20th, 2025

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Dancing event raises \$178K for chorus

The Jacksonville Children’s Chorus has announced the success of River City Dancing with the Stars 2025, which raised more than \$178,000 to support singer scholarships and ongoing programming at the organization.

Guiding the evening were emcees Allison Hollander, Board Member and Founder of Hollander Poker Consultants, and Sandy Grimm, chief legal officer at Southeastern Grocers and partner at Burr & Forman.

Judging the showcase were:

- Cheryl Riddick, director of customer experience, Jacksonville Transportation Authority
- Whitney Meyer, senior vice president and chief community impact officer, Jacksonville Jaguars
- Nicolas Alejandro Romero Marteau, professional dancer, supervisor and dance director, Arthur Murray Studio Orlando

Scoring followed the format of ABC’s Dancing with the Stars, with 50% based on judges’ scores and 50% from audience votes (\$1 per vote).

2025 Contestants:

- Terry Alexander, private baseball coach and former JU Dolphins Baseball head coach
- Janette Allen, vice president & advancement consultant, Galloway Gonzalez Consulting
- Ellen Cottril, co-owner, Avant Construction Group
- Sheila Cribb, market executive, Bank of America
- Dr. Anjali Lueck, Seabreeze Dental Group
- Dr. Kia Mitchell, double board-certified in family medicine and obesity medicine
- TJ Ward, executive director, Project Opioid at JAX Chamber
- Tracy Williams, president and CEO of Florida Health Care Plans, Guidewell

Returning to the stage was Giselle Carson, corporate immigration attorney and shareholder at Marks Gray, P.A., as a showcase performer and River City Dancing with the Stars ambassador.

Winners:

- First Place: Tracy Williams
- Second Place: Terry Alexander
- Third Place: Dr. Kia Mitchell

Local author finalist for major award

Award-winning author and Ponte Vedra Beach resident Ron Autrey has officially been selected as a finalist for the Author of the Year 2025 at the International Impact Book Awards, in the category of Fiction — Adventure Fiction for his book “Farnsworth Secret War.”

The Author of the Year winner will be announced live on stage at the Hollywood Gala on Oct. 4 at Loews Hollywood Hotel in Los Angeles for an unforgettable evening honoring thought leaders and changemakers from around the world.

This is more than an award ceremony. It’s a global movement to honor authorship, elevate visionary voices and transform the literary world. Founded with the mission to take authorship to the next level, the International Impact Book Awards was created to celebrate not only the books themselves — but the individuals behind them.

After his experience in the U.S. Army Security Agency, Autrey started a 40-year career with Miller Electric Co., where he served as chairman and CEO. In addition to working with various philanthropic interests, he currently publishes articles and essays on world events through Autrey Holdings, LLC’s Autrey’s Research Division.

He has two award-winning published books, “Ron’s World: All the Times I Died” and “Farnsworth Secret War,” with a soon-to-be released “Sea Shadows,” a book of poetry and prose.

Autrey and his wife Hilah Hillyer Autrey live in Ponte Vedra Beach. They have three children and four grandchildren.

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GUEST COLUMN

Essential tremor: A personal account

By Jan Kary

I was 60 at the time. Trying to take a photo. My hand was shaking so much I couldn't hold my phone still to capture a picture.

"I'm just nervous," I thought to myself. The same experience happened again and again. "It's just stress; I just need a good night's sleep, and everything will be fine," I concluded.

Over the years, my hands began shaking so much handling utensils, a glass of water or a ballpoint pen that it was embarrassing to eat in public or be at in-person business meetings.

My shaking got progressively worse to the point that people I was with not only noticed but asked, rather pointedly, "What's wrong with you? Why are you so nervous that your hands are shaking?"

After repeated embarrassing questions, I finally asked my primary care doctor about it in 2019.

"I'm reasonably sure you have essential tremor," she said. "Do you want me to refer you to a neurologist?"

"NO!" I replied.

The thought of seeing a specialist would make my shaky hands too much of a major "thing." Instead, my primary physician prescribed a medication I hoped would calm the shakes. Six months brought no changes. Another medication; still no change.

Official Diagnosis

When the shaking became even more

apparent in early 2021, I finally agreed to see a neurologist. He had me try to hold a glass of water, draw some spirals and write my name. It was then I received an official diagnosis of essential tremor, a condition usually characterized by tremors in hands, legs or head.

Essential tremor is similar — but different — from Parkinson's disease in that the former is usually apparent when you're doing something active, such as reaching, lifting, handwriting, walking or speaking. With Parkinson's, there is usually an "at rest" tremor.

I learned that while one million Americans suffer from Parkinson's disease, approximately 10 million Americans suffer from essential tremor. Why is "PD" so well known when relatively few have heard of "ET?" Chalk that up to Michael J. Fox and the tremendous awareness campaign of his charity and the well-staffed and well-funded Parkinson's Foundation.

The neurologist then referred me to a movement disorder specialist. This physician prescribed increasing amounts of a different, third medication. Ever hopeful, I eagerly awaited being able to calmly hold a glass of water. With each doctor's appointment, the embarrassing tests of being unable to sign my name, draw a spiral, pour a glass of water or do basic tasks made me shrink further into myself.

After three drugs with no results, what do I do now?

"Brain surgery," was the reply.

"WHAT? No way, no how, not ever!"

I replied. It took me about a year to wrap my head around the idea of brain surgery while I kept waiting for each new medication to work.

I consulted "Dr. Google." I became a "student" of essential tremor. I participated in online webinars. I researched and read about treatment options. I researched wearable devices and focused ultrasound alternatives. I participated in a clinical trial that focused on Botox injections. Then, in June 2022, I attended an in-person seminar with Boston Scientific's local Ponte Vedra rep, Elaine Keebaugh, Ph.D. She and Dr. Philip Tipton of Mayo Jax went through the Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) procedure. That presentation literally changed my life.

DBS has been used for many years and involves implanting electrodes in the brain to help regulate the abnormal brain activity causing the tremors.

Based on my research, I had already concluded that DBS, a proven, safe, practiced-for-over-20-years procedure, was the best next step for me. I was ready to say yes. Even with the frightening fact that during DBS, I would be wide awake while the neurosurgeon drilled through my skull to implant a thin narrow wire called a "lead," I thought, "Bring it on!"

But there are a lot of people in Jax in line to have DBS. So, there was a wait. I had to go through various pre-surgery reviews and tests. In retrospect, the delay was a good thing. I was so frightened at the prospect of brain surgery that it gave

me adequate time to get mentally comfortable and to hear the first-hand experience of others who had the procedure. My teeth were chattering so loudly when my sister drove me to the hospital in early January 2023 for my DBS surgery that I was concerned the surgeon would shoo me out of the OR. But they clamp your head into a frame so there was no issue.

Despite my fears, I enthusiastically say to others considering DBS: Do not be afraid! It does not hurt! There is a momentary vibration, but honestly and truly, there isn't pain. Several days later, a second surgery implanted the battery (called the "stimulator" — sort of similar to a pacemaker) in my chest. DBS patients are put to sleep for this second stage of surgery, so it's easy. Once the stimulator's settings are established, voila! Everything changed!

Suddenly, I could hold a glass! I could reach for something without shaking. I could sign my name legibly. And yes ... those darn spirals ... I could even draw a spiral! It was a marvelously successful surgery. The surgery for my left hand happened six months later, and I am now virtually tremor free.

One of the great joys of my life is leading a support group in Ponte Vedra for people with ET and their family members, friends and loved ones. We meet every two months at the Baptist Health-Place in Nocatee. If you suspect you have ET, you are more than welcome to join us! Jan Kary, jkary@verizon.net

GUEST COLUMN

The right equipment readies you for storms, unpredictable weather

Weather is more unpredictable than ever before, and homeowners should take stock of the outdoor power equipment they have in their garages and sheds to handle ensuing damage left behind. Preparation is key — before a storm and unseasonable weather hits a community.

"Today it's not enough to just prepare for each season," says Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI). "We're seeing powerful storms in places that normally don't get them — and too often leaving behind crippling damage. Being equipped with the right outdoor power equipment is critical for when hurricane-force weather events bring water and wind, ice and snow put you at a standstill, and power goes out."

To help people prepare, OPEI encourages homeowners to educate themselves by going to WeatherItBetter.com, which includes tips on having the right outdoor power equipment, severe weather and emergency cleanup, and safety measures,



Contributed photo

Always use the right tool for the job.

such as:

Have the right equipment on hand — before you need it. Acquire equipment based on weather, seasons and individual preferences before an emergency arises.

Know all equipment is not the same. Understand your equipment and its unique safety and usage requirements before using it. Review your owner's manual and follow all instructions.

Inspect equipment before use. Check the air filter, oil level, gasoline tank or batteries. Stored equipment should be

put away without fuel in the tank. Watch for missing or damaged parts. Tighten chainsaw chains. Replace damaged parts or take equipment to a qualified service representative.

Walk through your yard and work areas. Seek and remove objects, sticks, dog toys and other items that could create a hazard. Always keep children and pets away from running equipment. Hire a professional if a job is beyond your abilities.

Never alter or disable equipment's safety protection. Stay safe and follow the manufacturer's safety measures at all times.

Use fuel and batteries designed for the equipment. Use E10 or less in gasoline-powered equipment unless it's designed otherwise. Only use batteries or chargers that are manufacturer-specified.

Store fuel and batteries safely. Use containers designed for fuel and label them with the purchase date and ethanol content. Use up fuel before it's 30 days

old and run equipment dry of fuel before storage.

Keep battery packs away from other metal objects, like paper clips, coins, keys, nails or screws. These can make a connection from one terminal to another. Keep batteries stored away from one another.

Clean equipment before storing. Remove dirt, oil or grass before using and storing equipment. Store it in a dry place, avoiding damp or wet environments.

Plan ahead for safe placement of generators. Never place a generator in a home, garage, carport or near an open window or door. Have on hand and use outdoor-rated power cords long enough to keep it a safe distance from the house.

OPEI is an international trade association representing manufacturers and suppliers of power equipment, small engines, battery power systems, portable generators, utility and personal transport vehicles and golf cars.

Sports

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TIMUQUANA TO HOST 64TH JACKSONVILLE AMATEUR IN LATE JULY

By Anthony Richards

The 64th edition of the Jacksonville Amateur presented by Synovus will be hosted by Timuquana Country Club in Jacksonville July 24-26 and registration for the event is in full swing.

To this point, there has been an overwhelming contestant response to take part in the Jacksonville Area Golf Association's premier championship.

It will also be the first time Timuquana Country Club will host the 54-hole individual stroke play event, which will have a cut take place to half the field and ties coming after 36 holes.

Synovus returns as presenting sponsor this year after partnering with the event last year for the first time.

The field size for the tournament will be a maximum of 96 of Northeast Florida's top amateur golfers whose primary residence is in one of the nine counties that surround Jacksonville – Duval, Clay, St. Johns, Nassau, Putnam, Flagler, Columbia, Suwannee and Baker.

Interested male golfers must have a current certified USGA index of 2.9 or less to qualify and all contestants must be at least 16 years of age or under the age of 60 on or prior to the first round getting underway on July 24.

Registration for all entries will remain open until July 1 at 5 p.m. and the entry fee to compete is \$375.

Not only are bragging rights on the line during the prestigious tournament, but World Amateur Golf Ranking points will also be awarded to the top finishers.

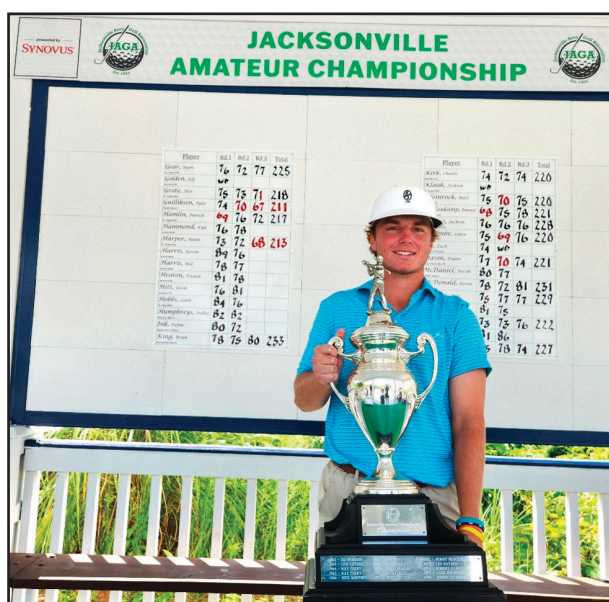


Photo courtesy of Jacksonville Amateur Golf Association
Adam Waller of Jacksonville and Valdosta State University won last year's title at Jacksonville Golf and Country Club.

The top 24 and ties will also be awarded merchandise certificates to the Timuquana Country Club golf shop totaling \$5,760, assuming there is a full field of 96 players.

There are two categories for players to enter during the Jacksonville Amateur with the exempt and open categories.

For the exempt category, entrants are those players who fill at least one of the following requirements:

- Jacksonville Amateur champion (2020 – 2024)
- Made the cut in the 2024 Jacksonville Amateur
- Members of the 2025 Underwood Cup Amateur Team

- 2025 JAGA Senior Amateur champion
- Top 10 finisher at 2025 JAGA First Coast Amateur
- Two North Florida Junior Golf Tour champions (TBD and subject to age restrictions)

Those eligible for the open category are players who meet the general entry requirements of age, handicap and hometown.

Open entrants will be screened by the tournament committee for inclusion in the field based on recent performance, past participation in JAGA events, members of a JAGA club and their golf resume.

If needed, a qualifier will be held to help decide the field on Sunday, July 13, at Eagle Harbor Golf Club.

The qualifier possibility was implemented in response to last year's record-breaking number of entries.

Adam Waller of Jacksonville and Valdosta State University won last year's title at Jacksonville Golf and Country Club.

The Jacksonville Amateur was first played in 1962, and it is JAGA's second oldest championship, only behind the JAGA Senior Amateur, which dates back to 1958.

Sporting JAX Aquatic Club merges with Planet Swim Aquatics

Sporting JAX Aquatic Club has announced a milestone in the growth of competitive swimming throughout Northeast Florida with the official merger of Planet Swim Aquatics into the Sporting JAX family. This unification brings together two strong programs to create a larger, more dynamic and competitive club, which is expected to enhance performance in the pool and broaden access to essential development and competition for swimmers of all ages and skill levels.

At the heart of this merger is a shared vision that values character, community and excellence. Together, the organizations are building a competitive swim club that not only nurtures future champions but also invests in the development of young athletes as teammates, leaders and individuals. It also upholds Planet Swim's legacy as one of Northeast Florida's premier aquatic competitive swim clubs.

Founded in 2009 by Gustavo Calado,

Planet Swim has provided more than 100,000 swim lessons to children and adults, ranging from beginner water safety to Olympic-level training. Now integrated into the Sporting JAX framework, this proven approach to competitive swimming will expand access to high-quality swim programming throughout the region.

To guide this next phase, the Sporting JAX Aquatic Club will be led by Steve Jungbluth as the director of competitive swimming. The former University of Florida coach is known for his success in the SEC and for developing Olympic-caliber athletes.

Additionally, the coaching team will be further strengthened by the proven leadership of John Morse as its new club president. With his 40-year career at the Nashville Aquatic Club, where he produced more than 65 Olympic trials qualifiers, Morse brings wisdom, passion and strategic insight to Sporting JAX

Aquatics.

"Our vision from the start has been to build a community-first swim club, one that develops character, fosters connection and prepares athletes to compete at the highest levels," said Jungbluth. "This merger is a powerful step toward realizing that vision."

"We're incredibly excited about what lies ahead," he continued. "It's an honor to welcome the athletes, coaches and families of Planet Swim into this new chapter of the Sporting JAX family. Together, we're building something truly special for today's swimmers and for generations to come."

Sporting JAX Aquatic Club was founded in March by Ricky and Danielle Caplin. This newly established organization is registered with USA Swimming and is led by a dedicated team that includes Morse, Bryan Welter, Eric Jacob, Jill Prosinski and Jungbluth.





"We extend our heartfelt gratitude to

the Julington Creek Plantation Community Development District for their continued partnership and unwavering support, said Danielle Caplin, Sporting JAX Aquatic Club Board of Directors chair. "Thanks to this collaboration, Sporting JAX remains proudly rooted in the Julington Creek community, while expanding our footprint to the Nocatee and Argyle Forest areas to serve more families and strengthen our regional presence."

Caplin added, "We also wish to thank and celebrate Coach Gus Calado, the Planet Swim staff and the many families who helped build a program known for its excellence and dedication to youth development. Their legacy will remain a cornerstone of Sporting JAX Aquatic Club's future."

For more information about the Sporting JAX Aquatic Club, go to sporting-jaxaquatics.com.

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L N G Y H B G G S J B I V W V S C B E O
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THE RECORDER

Serving Ponte Vedra, St. Augustine, The Beaches and Greater St. Johns County

The Ponte Vedra Recorder QUALIFIES FOR ALL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY LEGAL NOTICES

FICTITIOUS NAME

Notice Under Fictitious Name Law Pursuant to Section 865.09, Florida Statutes, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned, desiring to engage in business under the fictitious name of

the same, subject to ALL prior liens, if any, to the highest and best bidder for CASH IN HAND, the proceeds to be applied as far as may be to the payment of the same and satisfaction of the same.

INTEREST BY, THROUGH, UNDER OR AGAINST THE ESTATE OF JOHN JOSEPH III, DECEASED, CHRIS UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF JORICIS A/K/A JOHN JOSEPH III, DECEASED, AS TRUSTEES OF THE U.S. BANK TRUST ASSOCIATION, AS TRUSTEES OF CAPITAL TRUST 1, STATE OF FLORIDA, LISA ANN GRIFVIN SPOUSE OF LISA ANN UNKNOWN TENANT(S) IN COMMON WITH LISA GRIFVIN, are the Clerk of the Court will sell and best bidder for cash at the close of court, at 10:00 A.M., on June 12, 2024, the following described as set forth in said Final

NOTICE
IN THE CIRCUIT
COUNTY,
FLORIDA
PROBATE DIVISION

THE RECORDER
Celebrating 35 Years
Serving Ponte Vedra, St. Augustine, The Beaches and Greater St. Johns County
PonteVedraRecorder.com
VOLUME 55, NO. 15 \$1.00
Thursday, February 8, 2024

Major sculpture created in Mandarin
Harriet Beecher Stowe subject of work
By Shaun Ryan
A landmark work of art is taking shape in Mandarin — and the project will have an opportunity this week to be unveiled to the public in an art installation.

Post 129 sent pair to nationals as part of memorable year
By Anthony Richards
Sending representatives to the 2024 National American Legion Auxiliary Post 129 is a very special year for the club, as it is the 100th anniversary of the club's founding. The club has a long history of service to the community and the nation.

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Extra Space Storage, on behalf of itself or its affiliates, Life Storage or Storage Express, will hold a public auction to sell personal property described below be-

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DAIRY FARM WORD SEARCH

O C G G L C A W I J H K S E V O O H K B
L N V L V E A R T A G Y B O N D J H B H
W R J L T M M L E D I R E R I P W L T A
N R A S Y H U T C H E H R S U E H R H M
F E K N V E U H I W O B R A N H F E W A
T P A S T U R E E L A A E I T R T T K A
W K T I N M F R S G L K V D C I E U Y S
U L V D O J S T W U G H K U D E O U F D
D K F W L G E P E S G L A Y P I J N G E
D I J D R I L K R P D J F Y H L N P T E
E T W A N L S S I W S N W O R B C G R S
R K I I A C F E H B S L B Y B A B V J N
L N G Y H B G G S J B I V W V S C B E O
S M H N C L R A R H W W A P O M G R R T
U B Y E K C A R Y N I M O H F K N O S T
F I N M A P S O A S S W I E K S I L E O
A V I U A U S F O O U J E L N K K R Y C
S U V R P L M K F J D D W D K H L A I M
S I L A G E L H N F U V U N J O I P U L
L F Y O T C W V L U O C A K G V M T P L

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

AYRSHIRE
BEDDING
BREWERS GRAINS
BROWN SWISS
COTTON SEEDS
CUD

EARTAG
FEED
FORAGE
GRASS
GUERNSEY
HAY

HOLSTEIN
HOMINY
HOOVES
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Nominations ARE OPEN!



The Ponte Vedra Recorder, celebrating 55 years of community news excellence, has launched our seventh annual **BEST OF THE BEST of Ponte Vedra, 32081 & 32082.**

YOU, our valued readers, now have the chance to nominate your favorite businesses in various categories online. Online voting begins June 20th after nominations are complete.

HURRY, last day to nominate is June 19th!



Scan the QR code to submit your nominations!

www.pontevedrarecorder.com/bestof2025

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15				16				
17						18								
19						20				21				
					22				23					
			24	25					26				27	28
29	30							31					32	33
34						35	36					37		
38					39							40		
	41		42							43	44			
			45						46					
		47	48					49					50	51
53							54				55	56		
57											58			
59						60					61			

ACROSS

- Marsh plant
- Southern constellation ("The Peacock")
- Fogginess
- Home to Fools' Day
- Absence of the sense of pain
- Popular November holiday
- Consume food
- Buddy
- Long-haired goat-antelope
- Japanese honorific
- Actor Malek
- One point south of southeast
- Illegal acts
- As fast as can be done
- Prevents harm to young
- Exclamation of satisfaction
- African nation
- Slow-moving animal
- Oh, goodness!
- A team's best pitcher
- Cleanser
- Radioactivity units
- Expectorated matter
- Cover a wide range
- The central area of a church
- California capital (abbr.)
- Dutch painter Klaver
- 007's creator
- Impression of dishonesty
- Northeastern sports rivalry
- Cloths
- Stalin's police chief
- Hostelries
- Bitterly regret
- Anwar __, Egyptian statesman

DOWN

- Satisfy
- European health advocate
- Expression of annoyance
- Strong liquor
- Large red deer
- Holder of less common religious beliefs
- West Indian shrub

- Family of proteins
- Wealthy, influential business leader
- Low spirits
- Approves food
- Monetary unit of Iran and Oman
- Mary __, cosmetics
- Expressed in pithy maxims
- Relaxing spaces
- The NFL's big game
- Proof of payment (abbr.)
- Starchy preparation of dried orchid tubers
- Indicates near
- Minneapolis suburb
- Herring-like fish
- Doctors' group
- Pouches
- Bread dipping in sauce

- Commercials
- A reminder of past events
- Affected by injury
- Geological time
- Stationary part of a motor
- Brings together
- Of sound mind
- Personal computer
- Without (French)
- A bank might give you one
- Agricultural testing organization
- A small island
- Type of gene
- Murres
- Card game
- A measure of human health
- Australian airline (abbr.)
- One point south of due west
- Affirmative

SUDOKU

	5	9					4	
					8			
		8	1					5
3		5	7		6			9
8		4		9	3	6		1
				8		2	3	
	9	7	8				1	6
						9		
5		2			4	3	7	

Level: Beginner

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!



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